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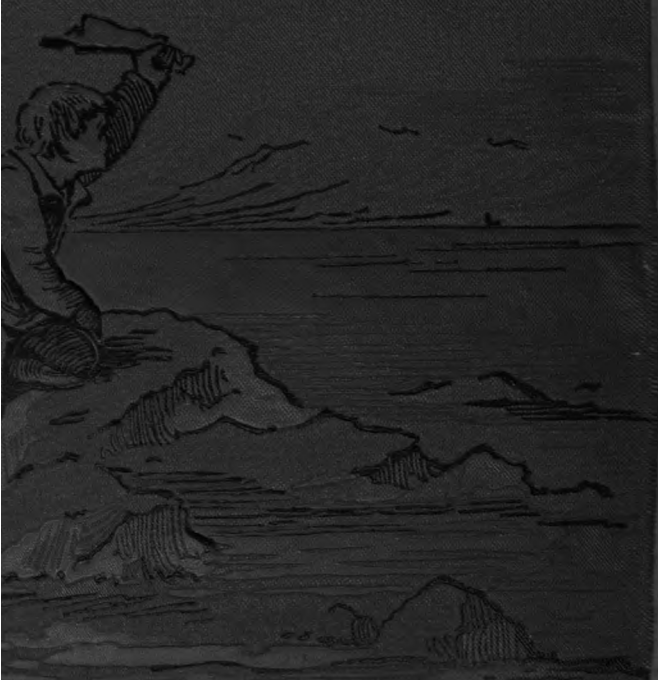
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THE  
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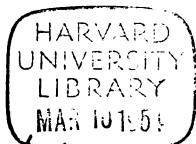
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**THE KELP-GATHERERS**

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# THE KELP-GATHERERS.

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## CHAPTER I.

### THE ELDER TWINS.

BEFORE Beman's Beach had become the popular summer resort which all tourists know to-day, there lived, a little back from the rocky coast that stretches away from it toward the southwest, a farmer named Elder. He had a large family, consisting mostly of girls; but there were two boys, who were twins.

The boys were called Moke and Poke. These were not their baptismal names, of course. Moke Elder was christened Moses, and Poke Elder received at the same time the respectable appellation of Porter,—both after their uncle, Mr. Moses Porter, who lived in the family; but they were so seldom called



by those names that most people seemed to have forgotten them. Moke was Moke, and Poke was Poke, the world over.

That is to say *their* world, which wouldn't have required a tape-measure quite twenty-five thousand miles long to go around it. "Frog End" was the nickname of the part of the town where they lived,—probably on account of a great marsh which was very noisy in spring,—and they were little known beyond its borders.

But everybody about Frog End and along the coast knew Moke and Poke. That is to say, they were known as twins, if not as individual, separate boys. They looked so much alike, both being thin-faced and tow-headed, and dressed so much alike, often wearing each other's clothes, that he who, meeting one alone, could always say "Moke," or "Poke," as the case might be,—and be sure he wasn't calling Moke "Poke" or Poke "Moke,"—must have known them very well indeed.

Of course, only a born Frog-Ender could

do that. I am not a Frog-Ender myself, and the only way I could ever tell them apart was by looking closely at their moles.

They had two moles between them, exactly alike, except that Moke wore his on the right cheek, quite close to the right nostril, while Poke hung out his sign on the left cheek, at about an equal distance from the left nostril; as if Nature had had just a pair of moles to throw in with their other personal attractions, and had divided her gift in this impartial way.

Even after people had learned these distinguishing marks, however, they couldn't always remember, at a moment, which had the right mole and which the left; but they would often say "Poke" to the right mole and "Moke" to the left mole, in a manner that appeared extremely ridiculous to the boys' seven sisters, who couldn't see that they resembled each other at all.

The twins were nearly always together, whether at work or at play; when one was sent on an errand, they would most generally

both go, if it was only to get a pound of board-nails or a spool of thread at the village store.

They were about the age of their neighbors and playmates, Oliver Burdeen (commonly called Olly), who lived just across two farms from them when he was at home, and Percival Bucklin (familiarily known as Perce), who lived still nearer, on the other side.

These four boys are the three heroes of our story, — counting the twins as one, — and they come into it on a certain afternoon late in August, just after a great storm had swept over the New-England coast.

Uncle Moses Porter — uncle of the twins on the mother's side: an odd and very shabby old bachelor — comes into it at the same time, but doesn't get in very far. It would be hard to make a hero of him.

At about four o'clock that day he stood in Mr. Elder's back-yard, barefooted and without his hat, watching the clouds and the wooden fish on the barn, and making up his mind about the weather. That was a

subject to which he had given the study of a lifetime. He could tell you as many "signs" as there are letters in the alphabet, and spell out with them very exactly tomorrow's weather; that is to say, what it should be, not always what it actually was, Nature sometimes neglecting in the strangest way her own plain rules. A great deal was said about Uncle Moses's occasional lucky hits, and very little about his frequent misses; and he enjoyed a world-wide reputation (the Frog-End world, again) as a weather-prophet, until "Old Probabilities" at Washington took the wind out of his predictions, and drove him, so to speak, out of the business.

But at the time I speak of he was at the pinnacle of his fame, and nobody ventured to doubt his prognostications. If the weather didn't turn out as he predicted, why, so much the worse for the weather!

"Wind has whipped round the right way this time, boys!" he remarked, after long and careful observation. "It's got square into the west, and I predict it's a-go'n' to stay there,

and give us fair weather, nex' four-'n'-twenty hours. Th' a'n't no rain in them clouds; it's all been squeezed out on 'em, or else I never seen a flyin' scud afore!"

He paused as if to relax his mind after its severe strain, and smiled as he came toward the woodshed, where the twins were standing.

"An' I tell ye what, boys! Cords o' that 'ere kelp the storm's hove up, is a-goin' to land, this tide an' to-morrer mornin's, an' you better be on hand to git our share on't."

Of all the farm work the twins ever tried, they found going for seaweed the most delightful. There was a relish of adventure in it; and it took them to the beach, which was always a pleasant change for boys brought up on Frog-End rocks. The kelp was usually hauled up from the shore, and left to rot in heaps; after which, it became excellent dressing for the land.

There was no good beach very near Mr. Elder's farm, but he had a right on Beman's Beach, two or three miles down the coast.

## CHAPTER II.

## A PARTNERSHIP.

MR. BUCKLIN, another Frog-End farmer, had a similar right, and he and his son Percival were that same afternoon talking about the expected harvest of kelp.

Mr. Bucklin was saying that there was nothing to be gained by starting for the beach till the next morning, and that he couldn't go even then, having some public business to attend to, he being one of the town's selectmen; and Percival—a bright, strong, enterprising boy of sixteen—was insisting that their team ought to be on the shore by daylight, and that he would be there with it, if he could get anybody to go with him, when the Elder twins came crossing fields and leaping fences, and finally tumbled over the bars into the yard where father and son were talking.

“Uncle Mose says” — began Moke.

“Wind’s all right for the kelp,” struck in Poke.

“There’ll be stacks of it!” Moke exclaimed

“And we’re going!” Poke continued.

That was the way they usually did an errand or told a story: one giving one fragment of a sentence, and his brother the next, if, indeed, they didn’t both speak together.

They ended with a proposition. Their father had gone to Portland with the team; and if Mr. Bucklin would let Perce take his tip-cart and yoke of steers, they would go with him, and all the seaweed gathered by the three should be shared equally by the two farmers.

“And what we want is” — said Moke.

“To start after an early supper this evening,” said Poke.

“Camp to-night, at the beach” — Moke added.

“And be on hand to begin work” — Poke contributed his link to the conversational chain.



“As soon as the tide turns in the morning,” rattled both together.

Mr. Bucklin smiled indulgently.

“I think your uncle is right,” he said. “And I’m willing Perce should go. Though I don’t know about your starting to-night to camp out.”

“Oh, yes!” exclaimed Percival, as eager for the adventure as if he had been a third twin, and shared the enthusiasm of his two other selves. “That will be all the fun!”

“We’ll take some green corn” — said Moke.

“And new potatoes” — said Poke.

“And a sickle to cut grass” — Moke ran on.

“And make a fire of driftwood” — Poke outstripped him.

“For the steers,” said Moke, finishing his own sentence, and not Poke’s.

“To roast ’em,” concluded Poke, referring to the potatoes and green corn, and not to the steers.

“It’ll be just grand!” Percival exclaimed. “May we, father? The tide will turn about daylight; we’ll have our breakfast on the

beach, and be ready to go to work ; and we'll haul two big heaps on the shore, one for us and one for them, and leave 'em till they're ready to draw away and spread on the land. Say ! may we, father ? ”

“ You're not so sure the kelp'll land,” said the cautious farmer. “ It's mighty notional about it sometimes.”

“ But if the wind keeps off shore it will ! ” said Moke and Poke, two voices for a single thought.

“ The wind may chip around again, and the kelp all disappear as clean as if the beach had been swept. But I don't care,” added the farmer indulgently. “ If you boys want to take the chance, I'll let Perce have the steers. You might gather some driftwood, anyway. The storm must have driven a good lot of that high up, out of the reach of the common tides.”

His easy consent made the boys as happy as if they had been going to a circus ; and they immediately began to make preparations for the trip.

Moke and Poke ran home for their supper, and came running back in an incredibly short time, bringing a basket of provisions, with ears of unhusked corn and bottles of spruce-beer sticking out, a blanket for their bed on the beach, and each a three-tined pitchfork for handling the kelp. These were put into the cart, along with articles furnished by Percival, and a quantity of hay which Mr. Bucklin said they would find comfortable to sleep on that night, even if it didn't come handy to feed the oxen.

The yoked steers were then made fast to the cart, and they set off.

## CHAPTER III.

## GOING FOR SEAWEED.

NEVER king in his coach enjoyed a more exhilarating ride than our three youngsters in the old tip-cart, drawn by the slow cattle along the rough country road. The source of happiness is in our own hearts; and it is wonderful how little it takes to make it run over, in a healthy boy.

A board placed across the cart-box served as a seat; and when one of them tired of riding on that, he would tumble in the hay. Perce wielded the ox-gad at first; but after a while the twins wanted to drive. Both reached for the whip at once.

“Look here! you can’t both have it!” cried Perce. “The oldest first!”

“I’m the oldest,” declared Moke.

“So I’ve heard you say,” Perce replied.

"But I don't see how anybody ever remembered."

"They looked out for that when they named us," said Moke.

"It was uncle Moses's idea," said Poke. "He told 'em, 'Call the oldest by my first name and the youngest by my last name' —

"'And that will kind o' fix it in folks's minds,'" Moke completed the quotation.

"That was before they discovered the moles," said both together.

"I never thought of that," said Perce. "But whenever anybody asks me which is the oldest, I think of your initials, and run over in my mind — *L, M, N, O, P*; — *M* comes before *P*; then I say, 'Moke's the oldest.' But how could they tell you apart before they saw the moles?"

"They tied a red string around Moke's ankle," said Poke.

"But once the string came off, and ma thinks it might have got changed," said Moke.

"And to this day she can't say positively

but what I am Moke, and Moke is me," said Poke.

Perce laughed. "Why didn't you have something besides a couple of teenty-taunty moles to distinguish you by?" he asked. "Why didn't one of you be light-complexioned and the other dark? There'd have been some sense in that."

"We couldn't!" said Poke.

"You didn't try," replied Perce.

"We couldn't if we had tried," said Moke.

"Twins are always" —

"The same complexion," struck in Poke. "Just like one person."

"No; they're not; there's no rule about that," said Perce. "And when you talk of one person — have you heard of the man over in Kennebunk?"

"What about him?" asked the twins.

"Why, haven't you heard? One-half his face," said Perce, "as if you should draw a line straight down his forehead and nose to the bottom of his chin," — he drew a line down his own face, by way of illustration; "one

half—it's the right half, I believe—is as black as a negro's. Yes; I'm sure it's the right half."

"Pshaw!" said Moke.

"Oh, thunder!" said Poke.

"I don't believe it!" said both together.

"It's true, I tell you!" Perce insisted.

"My father has seen him; and my father wouldn't lie."

"He must have had some disease," said Moke.

"What they call a leopard," said Poke.

"You mean a leper?" laughed Perce. "No; he isn't a leper, nor an albino. Why, boys! didn't you ever hear of such a case? It's quite common, and it's easily explained."

"I give it up! How do you explain it?" said the twins.

"Simple enough!" exclaimed Perce. "The other side of his face is black, too." And he keeled over backward on the hay.

It was an old joke which he had indeed heard his father tell; but it was new to the twins, who were completely taken in by it.

“Throw him out of the cart!” shrieked Poke, half smothered with laughter, at the same time seizing hold of Perce as if to execute his own order.

“I’ll jolt him out!” cried Moke, who was driving; and he began to urge the oxen into a heavy, clumsy trot, which shook up the cart and its contents in a way that was more lively than pleasant.

“Oh, hold on!” cried Perce, with the jolts in his voice. “You’ll break the e-g-g-s in my ba-ask-et!”

“I know how to prevent that,” said Poke.

“How?” asked Perce.

“Suck ’em!” giggled Poke.

“How are you going to suck ’em without breaking ’em?” Perce inquired. “Look here, Poke! I’ve got a large-sized one that will take a bigger fellow than you to suck it, I bet you.”

“It’s a hen’s egg?”

“Yes, a hen’s egg; and a good one. I got it out of the nest under the corn-house this afternoon.”



"I'll bet a dollar I can suck it!" exclaimed Poke. "I never saw a hen's egg yet" —

"That you couldn't suck," added Moke, helping him out. "That's so!"

"Don't bet more money than you've got in the world," replied Perce; "I don't want to break you and all your relations. Say a cent, and I'll take the bet."

Poke didn't have even a cent. But he made the wager, all the same; and Perce drew an egg from the basket.

"I don't call that a very big egg; do you, Moke?" cried Poke.

"I guess you can suck that; if you can't, I can," replied Moke from the seat, looking around at the boys behind him on the hay.

"I'll bet *you* another cent he can't, nor you either!" said Perce. He laughed as Moke took the bet; and added, "If there were a few more of you twins, and I should win all the money you haven't got, I should soon be a millionaire!"

"Of course, I'm to have the privilege of breaking it?" questioned Poke, poisoning the egg.

"Break it any way you please," chuckled Perce.

The oxen were walking again; Moke turned leisurely on the cross-board to watch the operation, and to give Poke instructions and encouragement if he saw him about to fail.

"Well! I'll show you how to suck eggs and win wagers!" Poke declared with confidence, as he cracked the shell on the edge of the cart-box. "Here goes — if there isn't a chicken in it."

Holding the egg by its ends with the fingers of both hands, and inserting his thumb-nails in the crack he had made, he threw his head back, and prepared to drop the contents of the shell into his open mouth. Then suddenly he lowered the egg, with an exclamation:

"Gracious mighty!"

"What's the matter?" demanded Moke, while Perce appeared ready to go into fits with laughter.

"It's b'iled! b'iled hard!" said Poke. "You can't suck a b'iled egg!"

"Who said you could? And what am I

betting about? A cent apiece from both of you," said Perce. After the laughter had subsided, he added, "You may have that egg, Poke, for your supper."

"I've had one supper, but I shall want another by the time we get to the beach," said Poke.

"So shall I!" cried Perce. "We'll make a big fire on the shore, and have a jolly time. And, say, boys! let's call for Olly Burdeen, and make him come down on the beach with us to-night."

"That will be fun, if he ain't too proud to go with country people, now," replied Moke.

"Since he's been waiting on city folks, he's stuck up as if he had tumbled into a cask of molasses," said Poke.

"Olly is all right," said Perce. "He doesn't put on any airs with me. We'll have him out, anyway!"

## CHAPTER IV.

## OLLY BURDEEN'S NEW CLOTHES.

THERE was but one boarding-house at Beman's Beach in those days. Originally a farm-house, it stood in not the very best situation, a little distance back from the sea, in a hollow of the hills. It was kept by a farmer's widow, Mrs. Murcher, who, as her business expanded, built on additions until her house looked as if it had the mumps in one enormously swollen cheek.

While his Frog-End mates were driving thitherward in the tip-cart, and talking about him, Master Olly Burdeen, the third hero in our story (counting the twins as one), was standing before a bureau in Mrs. Murcher's best corner room, and smiling graciously at his image in the oval-shaped looking-glass.

He held a hair-brush in his right hand, and a comb in his left, and, after giving his sleek

locks an artistic touch or two, he would tip the mirror a trifle and recede a step, to get a still more pleasing view of his personal perfections.

It was not his own room, there in the new part—the swollen cheek, as it were—of the summer boarding-house. Nor can I have the satisfaction of declaring that it was his own brush and comb he was making such free use of, or his own cologne that had imparted to his naturally rough, rusty hair its extraordinary fragrance and smoothness. But the broadly smiling mouth, snub nose, and freckles were possessions nobody would have thought of disputing with Master Olly; and the tolerably well-fitting, genteel, grayish-brown suit he had on had belonged to him about eight hours.

Olly Burdeen was not, in fact, one of Mrs. Murcher's boarders. He was only a boy-of-all-work, employed by her for the season. The room belonged to Mr. Hatville, who had gone off yachting that afternoon; and Olly had taken temporary possession of it, to admire

himself before the convenient glass in his new clothes.

For new they were to him, although they had been pretty well worn that summer by the friendly young boarder who, on departing in the morning, had made Olly a present of them in return for the errands Olly had done for him.

This was the first opportunity the proud recipient had had to try them on. He had never in his life worn anything so stylish, and we can smile tolerantly at the innocent vanity with which he surveyed himself in Mr. Hatville's mirror. His liberal use of Mr. Hatville's hair-brush and cologne-bottle was not, perhaps, so excusable. And when with fearful joy he took from its embroidered case by the mirror the tempting gold watch which Mr. Hatville had left hanging there, either by accident or design, on changing his clothes that afternoon to go yachting, — when, I say, Master Burdeen lifted out that valuable time-piece by its dangling chain, and placed it in the watch-pocket of his new waistcoat, it must

be owned that he was carrying his ideas of a boarder's hospitality too far.

"It only wanted a watch to set it off," he said, "and here it is!"

In his button-hole he hooked the gold guard, letting the heavy seal hang, and the chain fall in a graceful curve on his vest. Then he drew out the watch, and opened it with a pressure of the spring (it was a hunter's case), and looked at the dial; shut it again with a delightful snap, and replaced it in his pocket; strutting the while with amiable satisfaction before the tilted glass.

"I'll have just such a watch of my own some day!" he said to himself. "And just such a gold chain, with a seal as big as that. See if I don't!"

With a sigh he started to put it back in the embroidered case where he had found it. But that required too great an effort of self-denial.

"I'd like to wear it a few minutes; where'll be the harm?" he said. "Of course, I won't let any accident happen to it."

He looked at the time again; it was half-

past six. The two or three men boarders who remained with Mrs. Murcher (for it was now late in the season) had gone yachting, and the ladies were at tea. It was an hour of leisure with Olly, and, having got on his new rig, he thought it would be pleasant to take a stroll on the beach, a sort of rehearsal of his rôle of walking gentleman, before going that evening to show himself to the admiring natives at Frog End. He couldn't resist the temptation to carry the watch, on this preliminary excursion; buttoning the guard and seal under the top buttons of his coat, so that they shouldn't be observed as he left the house.

"I only wish *she* could see me!" he whispered blushing to himself, as he went down the stairs.

"She" was Miss Amy Canfield, the youngest of the lady boarders, and in his eyes the prettiest, perhaps because her very thin, prominent nose presented so great a contrast to his snub. She had been kind to Olly, as, indeed, the most of the boarders had been; and it put him into a warm glow, from his cheeks to his



shins, as he thought of meeting her surprised gaze.

But Amy was at tea with the rest, and as oblivious of him at that moment as if he had never existed. So he passed out of the house unnoticed, and went to enjoy his little strut alone, unbuttoning his coat again, and glancing down at the superb chain and seal, as he took the sandy path to the beach.

“If I see the Susette,” he said — for that was the name of the yacht — “I’ll hurry back, and have the watch in its place again long before Mr. Hatville gets around.”

This he fully intended to do. But neither from the intervening sand-hills, nor yet from the shore itself, which he reached after a short walk from the boarding-house, was the yacht anywhere to be seen.

The sea had gone down rapidly since the recent gale. It rolled on the beach, in breakers made dark and turbid by the seaweed which, upturned by the storm and mixed with sand, still tumbled and washed to and fro in the waves.

“Wind’s got around square in the west,” observed Olly. “Won’t the yacht have a mean time beating up!”

The sky was partly covered by heavy masses of broken clouds, in an opening of which the sun was just setting over dark growths of pine and spruce that rose behind the dunes, a little back from the beach. As it went down, the shadows of the woods stretched out, like wings, over the dunes and the smooth, glistening slope of beach-sand, just washed by the receding tide. Then the sunset light on the white crests of the breakers was quenched, and the whole sea was in gloom. For a moment only, for now the flying clouds caught a flush which spread swiftly over the sky, until the entire heavens, almost down to the sea rim, appeared one burning flame.

The sea itself had a strange, wild beauty, the dark and sullen waves but half consenting to reflect the glow of the clouds on their heaving breasts.

## CHAPTER V.

## LAUNCHING THE DORY.

"JUST the time to take a little row," thought Olly Burdeen, as he strolled about, looking sometimes admiringly at his new clothes and the gay watch-guard, and sometimes casting wishful glances at the sea.

He knew the thrilling pleasure of crossing and recrossing the breakers in a good boat, and rocking on the swells outside.

"I believe I'll try it once," he said. "Maybe I can see the yacht around the point."

The point was a rocky arm of the shore which shut off the ocean view on the north-east, the direction from which the Susette was expected. But the little harbor the yacht would have to enter was a deep cove in the broken coast at the other end of the beach, a quarter of a mile away.

“It can’t possibly get in without my seeing it in season,” thought Olly, with a glance at the watch, which he took from his pocket, and opened and shut again with a sort of guilty joy for the twentieth time.

There were a couple of dories drawn up above high-water mark; and he knew where a pair of old battered oars were hidden under a row of bathing-houses close by. He drew them out, and threw them on the sand. Then he looked at the seaweed in his way,—little windrows of it littering the beach, and dark masses rolling in the surf. The tide had been going out then about three hours.

“I can get through that easy enough,” he said.

He dragged the lightest of the dories down to the water’s edge, and put in the oars. He knew just how it should be launched, and understood the necessity of sending it straight across the breakers, and never, by any chance, letting them strike it sidewise.

Placing himself at the upper end, he waited for a good wave, and pushed the boat into it,

running with it until his feet were almost in the water, then holding it firmly until another wave lifted it. Just as that was subsiding, he gave the dory another push, leaped in at the same time, caught up the oars, and had them in the rowlocks and in the water just as the third wave came.

So far so good. He had done the same thing many times before, and had never met with an accident. Two or three sturdy strokes, and he would have been safe outside the rollers. But, at a critical moment, he paused to look at a few spatters of water on his new clothes; and in that moment one of his oars caught in a whirling tangle of kelp.

The boat was going out swiftly in one direction; the billow that bore the kelp was rushing in with tremendous force in the other. Nobody knows the power of a wave who has not felt it at some such crisis. What happened was over so quickly that Olly himself could not have explained it. A brief struggle, a terrible wrench, a buffet in the breast and face from the end of an oar, — and he was lying on his

back in the dory with his heels above the thwarts.

For a few seconds he lay there, half stunned by the blow and the fall. His breath seemed to have been quite knocked out of his body. It didn't take him long to recover it, however, and to reverse the position of his head and heels. When he did so, he found the boat swinging around broadside to the breakers, with one threatening at that very moment to overwhelm it.

Instinctively he seized an oar, and pulled with all his might to head the dory to the wave. He succeeded, and sent it careening safely over it and the next great swell, and so out to sea.

But it was at the expense of the oar. It was an old one, much worn by the friction of the rowlocks, and his last stroke broke it short off at the weak point. The paddle-end fell overboard, and only the handle remained in his hand.

He then turned to look for the other oar, and found that he had lost it at the time of

his tumble. He could see it going over on a breaker, several rods behind him. For now the wind took the dory, and was wafting it away almost as rapidly as if it carried a sail.

He tried paddling with the stub that remained in his hand, but made so little headway with it that he began to be seriously alarmed. He had been sufficiently startled by his accident, and the danger of an overturn in the rollers; but he now saw himself in face of an unforeseen peril.

He at first thought he would jump overboard, and swim to the beach; but even then he remembered his clothes, which a wetting might ruin, to say nothing of Mr. Hatville's watch.

There was, besides, another danger. The kelp! He was a pretty good swimmer; but could he ever make his way through breakers in which such fields of seaweed tossed and rolled?

The night was shutting down with gathering clouds. The wind struck the skiff with a force he had not felt under the lee of the

woods. Not a human being was in sight, nor a boat — only two or three distant sails on the horizon.

“Oh, the yacht! Where is the yacht?” he cried aloud, gazing eagerly around the point of rocks, the view beyond which was rapidly opening as he drifted out to sea.

A little while before, he would have been sorry enough to have the Susette get in before he had time to land and run back to the boarding-house with the borrowed watch; but now he wished for nothing so devoutly as that it might come along, and pick him up — so much worse things might happen than the discovery of the time-piece in his possession.

But no yacht hove in sight. The glory had faded out of the sky. The sea darkened; the wind increased. He shouted for help, though with little hope of making himself heard.

There were only women at the boarding-house, and, even if his voice reached them, it must have sounded so faint and far away as to attract no especial attention. But the



upper windows were visible over the sand-hills. Perhaps somebody — perhaps Amy Canfield herself — was gazing from them.

In that hope he swung his hat with frantic gestures of distress, still screaming for help, as he drifted away on the darkening waters.

## CHAPTER VI.

## CAMPING ON THE BEACH.

THE kelp-gatherers, with their tip-cart and ox-team, had, in the meanwhile, entered the belt of woods which stretched along the coast, back from the sea.

Tall trees rose on both sides of the narrow, sandy road, their tops meeting overhead. There was on the outskirts a scanty undergrowth, which, however, soon disappeared, leaving the open aisles of the forest, with here a brown carpet of pine-needles, and there a patch of bright moss.

The sun was going down. The spots and flickers of wine-colored light vanished from the boughs. The long bars of shadow, cast by the great trunks, became merged in one universal shade, and evening shut down upon the woods.

Soon another sound mingled with that of

the wind sweeping through the pines and firs. It was the roar of the sea.

The boys were more quiet now, the solemn scene filling their hearts with tranquil joy. The large trees soon gave place to a smaller and thicker growth of spruce and balsam, the boughs of which now and then touched the cart-wheels as they passed. Somewhere in the dim wilderness a thrush piped his evening song.

"Hark!" said Perce. "I heard something besides a bird. Like somebody calling!"

"A loon," said Moke.

"A loon out on the water," said Poke. "The sea is just off here."

They soon had glimpses of it through openings among the trees. But now the sound of it became louder; the woods, too, moaned like another sea in the rising wind, and the cries were no longer heard.

They came out upon a spot of low, grassy ground behind the sand-hills. There was a fresh-water pool near by. Perce thought it a good place for the oxen; and he "geed"

them out on the roadside. Mrs. Murcher's boarding-house was in sight.

"Suppose I run up there and find Olly before it gets any darker," said Perce. "You can be unhitching the steers from the cart, and getting 'em around in a good place to feed. Fasten 'em to the cart-wheel by this rope; tie it in the ring of the yoke. Let 'em drink first."

"All right," said the twins. "Go ahead."

And off Perce ran to summon his friend to their festivities.

The twins turned the cattle into the grass, and then began to make things ready for their camp and supper, keeping up all the time an incessant chatter, which prevented them from hearing again the cries of the supposed loon, growing fainter and fainter on the distant waves.

Neither did Perce hear them, as he hastened along the path in the gloomy hollow, and mounted the piazza steps. In the hall-door of the boarding-house he was met by a tall girl of seventeen, with a fine brunette com-

plexion, piercing dark eyes, and a high, thin, Roman nose.

Overawed a little by her rather imposing style of dress and features, Perce pulled off his cap, and, begging her pardon, inquired for Oliver Burdeen.

“Burdeen? Oliver?” she queried. “Oh!” with a pleasant smile, “you mean Olly!”

“Yes,” he replied. “We all call him Olly where he lives, but I wasn’t sure he would be known by that name here.”

“He isn’t known by any other!” laughed the young lady. “He’s about somewhere; I believe he’s always about somewhere! Mrs. Merriman,” she called to a lady in the parlor, “where’s ubiquitous Olly?”

“I don’t know, Amy,” replied the lady. “Didn’t he go with the gentlemen in the yacht?”

Amy almost thought he did; yet it seemed to her she had seen him that afternoon; a position of uncertainty on the part of that young lady which wouldn’t have been highly flattering to the vanity of Master Burdeen,

even if he hadn't been at that moment beyond the reach of flattery.

"Mrs. Murcher can tell you," she said, turning to walk back to the end of the hall. "She is here, in the dining-room."

Mrs. Murcher thought Olly must be in his room.

"I believe he is going home this evening," she said; "he wants to show his folks a new suit of clothes he has had given him. I guess he's trying them on."

"I am a neighbor of his," said Perce. "I am camping on the beach with some friends; and we want him to join us."

"Well!" exclaimed the landlady, "you can go right up to his room and find him. It's in the old part of the house; but you'd better go up the front way; it's lighter."

She was explaining to Perce that he must go up one flight, proceed to the end of the corridor, and then step down into a lower passage, — when the tall young brunette called over the banisters, "I'll show him!"

He mounted after her; and she threw open

the door of what seemed an unoccupied room, to let more light from its windows into the corridor.

“Be careful not to stumble!” she warned him. “That’s his room, right before you, as you go down those steps.”

So saying, she disappeared in some other room, and Perce was left alone in the dim hall. He paused a moment to get a glimpse of the sea through the door and window of the room she had opened, which happened to be Mr. Hatville’s room; then groped his way to Olly’s door, and knocked.

In a little while he returned alone to his friends on the beach.

“I couldn’t find him,” he said. “Mrs. Murcher sent me up to his room, but he wasn’t there; and I went all over the place. Then she said she thought he must have gone home, to show his folks a new suit of clothes; he had asked her if he might; but she didn’t expect him to go so soon.”

“Olly’s made, if he’s got some new clothes!” said Moke.

“He never’ll speak to us, after that!” said Poke. “Never mind; we can wake Nicodemus without him.”

“Wake Nicodemus!” Moke shouted gleefully, to hear his voice resound in the woods.

“Wake Nicodemus!” Poke repeated. And the three joined gayly in the chorus of a song then popular, —

“Now, run and tell Elijah to hurry up Pomp,  
And meet us at the gum-tree down in the swamp,  
To wake Nicodemus to-day!”

The very human biped whose cries had been mistaken for a loon’s heard their voices wafted to him by the wind — the same wind that was blowing him farther and farther from the shore.

He screamed again, wildly; but his own voice sounded weaker and weaker, while the merry chorus still went up from the little camping-out party on the beach.

“Wake Nicodemus to-day!”

The boys sang and chatted as they worked. They made their beds in a hollow of the





THE LITTLE CAMPING-OUT PARTY ON THE BEACH. — Page 48.



wind-swept dunes, where there would be less annoyance from mosquitoes than in the shelter of the woods, and spread their hay and blankets upon the dry sand.

“Besides,” said Perce, “the daylight will strike us here, and wake us early.”

“Wake Nicodemus!” laughed Poke.

And then they all burst forth again, -

“Wake Nicodemus to-day!”

The chasing clouds gathered, until the sky was almost completely overcast. The moon would not rise till late; it became dark rapidly. But as the gloom of night thickened on land and sea, a little golden flame shot up on the shore, and grew large and bright as the surrounding shadows became more dense.

It was the flame of the boys' camp-fire, which they kindled on the seaward side of the dunes, and fed with rubbish from the high-water mark of the recent storm. Later tides had not reached it, and plenty of it was dry enough to burn.

Chips and shingles, bleached seaweed,

broken planks, strips and slabs from saw-mills on some far-away river, and other refuse, littered the strand; here, a broken lobster-pot which the waves had washed ashore, and there, a ship's fender, worn smooth, with a fragment of rope still held in the auger-hole by its knotted end. Such of this as best suited their immediate purpose the boys gathered for their fire; and Olly, in his wave-tossed boat, could see their agile figures running to and fro in the light of the flames.

"There'll be heaps of flood-wood, as well as kelp, for us to gather to-morrow," said Perce. "Don't put any more on the fire, boys."

"Why not?" asked the twins.

"There's no use wasting it. We've fire enough. We'll roast our corn, and go to bed, so as to be up early. It's high tide before five to-morrow," Perce added.

"Then wake Nicodemus!" cried Moke.

And again they raised the wild chorus, —

"Now, run and tell Elijah to hurry up Pomp,  
And meet us at the gum-tree down in the swamp,  
To wake Nicodemus to-day!"

“Olly ought to be here!” said Perce. “He must have gone home by the coast; and that’s how we missed him.”

Even then, but for the noise of the surf and the whistling of the wind, they might have heard Olly’s last screams; and, by straining their eyes, they might have seen far out on the gloomy deep a dim object, now rising for a moment against the line of the evening sky, and now disappearing in a hollow of the waves.

With hay about their heads to shelter them from the wind, and the light of their camp-fire gleaming over them, the kelp-gatherers lay under their blankets, in the shelter of the dunes. They talked or sang until the flames died to a feeble glimmer, that served to bring out by contrast the surrounding gloom of sea and land and sky.

“Isn’t it dark, though!” exclaimed Perce. “I had no idea it would cloud up so. I believe it is going to rain. Then sha’n’t we be in a fix?”

“It can’t rain,” said Moke.

“No fear of that,” added Poke, in a muffled voice from under his blanket.

“What’s the reason?” Perce demanded.

“Uncle Moses said so,” replied both the twins together.

“Oh, then, of course, it can’t!” laughed Perce. “And the wind won’t change, and carry the kelp all off, and land it on some other beach, as it did the last time I was coming to get seaweed here. The wind clipped around to the nor’ard and no’t’-east, and in the morning this beach, that had been covered with it, was as clean as a whistle; while Coombs’s cove, where there hadn’t been any, was full of it.”

“Who’s going to wake Nicodemus in the morning?” asked Moke.

“The one who’s awake himself first,” said Perce. And he sang, the others joining in, —

“‘Wake me up,’ was his charge, ‘at the first break of day,

Wake me up for the great jubilee!’”

After that they became silent. The fire died on the beach. The breakers plunged and drew back with incessant noise in the dark-

ness; the wind moaned in the woods, and whistled among the coarse, sparse grass and wild pease that grew about the dunes. But, notwithstanding the strangeness of their situation, the boys were soon asleep.

Uncle Moses proved a true prophet. There was no rain in the huddling clouds that at one time overspread the sky. They broke and lifted, and bright stars peeped from under their heavy lids. Then the moon rose and silvered them, and shed a strange light upon the limitless, unresting, solitary waves.

## CHAPTER VII.

## ADRIFT IN A DORY.

OLLY could for a long time see the boys by the light of their camp-fire, excepting when the tops of the rolling billows hid them from view.

Although too far off at any time to recognize his friends, he made out snatches of the song then in vogue in his neighborhood; and he believed them to be Frog-End boys who had come to the beach for kelp.

Sometimes they passed between him and the fire; and finally they stood or crouched around it, as the wavering flames died down to a bright-red glow on the shore. To see them so near and so happy, — it seemed to him that everybody was happy who was not paddling desperately in a frail skiff, against a relentless wind, — to hear them singing and shouting, so wholly unconscious of him in his distress, was intolerable agony.





“THE DISTANCE FROM THE SHORE WAS STEADILY INCREASING.” — Page 55.



“Oh, why can't they hear?” he exclaimed, in a voice to the last degree hoarse with calling for help. “Why couldn't they look this way once? Now, it is too late!”

He was by this time greatly exhausted; for, when not signalling and calling, he had been making frantic efforts to paddle the dory against the wind. At first he had used the oar-handle, but he found it wholly ineffectual. Then he had torn up one of the thwarts, but it was too short and too clumsy for his purpose; and though for a time he seemed to make headway, the distance from the shore was steadily increasing.

If he could have held the boat in its course, as with a pair of oars, he might have made progress even with that unwieldy paddle. But he lost time and strength in shifting it from side to side; and, in spite of all he could do, the wind and the waves would now and then give the light, veering skiff a turn, and he would suddenly find himself paddling out to sea. However, these efforts prevented him from being blown speedily out of sight of land.

And when the boys on the beach, after due preparation, stuck their ears of green corn on the sharpened ends of sticks, and roasted them in the fire, he still kept the little group in view. He had no doubt that they were cooking their supper. No wonder he wept with despair at the contrast of that cheerful scene with his own terrible situation!

The fire faded to a red eye of burning coals; all other objects grew indistinct, excepting the black outline of the woods against the soft evening red of a rift in the sky, and one pure star brightening in those ethereal depths. Another starry beam, yet too low down for a star, Olly knew must be a light in one of the upper windows of the boarding-house.

Was it in Mr. Hatville's room? Had he returned, and discovered the loss of his watch? And could poor Olly hope ever to make restitution and explanations? Suppose he should indeed be lost at sea! would it not be believed that he had yielded to temptation and purposely run away with the watch?

The danger his life was in was enough for

the wretched boy, without this fear for his reputation. He thought of his folks at home, — his mother and sisters, for his father was dead, — and he wondered if they would believe him capable of a folly so much greater than that he had in mind when he so innocently (as it seemed to him then, but not now) borrowed the bright bauble. And what would Amy Canfield think?

All vanity had been killed in him from the moment he found himself in actual peril. It made him sick at heart to remember the satisfaction he so lately felt in his new clothes. He no longer drew the watch proudly from his pocket; hardly once did he glance downward at the big seal and gold guard hooked in the button-hole of his vest — a hated sight to him now.

When all hope of reaching the shore against such a wind was gone, he still struggled to keep the dory within hailing distance of the yacht, when it should come beating up from the north-east. But no yacht hove in sight; and, if it passed, it must have been under the shadow of the shore.

Clouds closed again over the one bright star and the patch of silver light in the west. The utter desolation of night lay about him on the lonely, weltering waters. All along the coast now he could see occasional lights — the lights in happy dwellings; but on the seaward side, only a faint gleam showed the line where sky and ocean met. There were no sounds but the ceaseless turmoil of the billows, the frequent slapping of a wave under the flat-bottomed boat, and his own fitful sobs.

His last hope lay in crossing the track of some coaster or fishing-craft that might pick him up. But could that occur before morning? And could he expect that his ill-managed dory would ride safely all night on the increasing waves? The strong wind off shore, meeting the ocean swells, was blowing up a heavy chop sea that threatened a new danger. What a night was before him, at the best!

Suddenly his hat blew off, and disappeared immediately on the black waves.

The distant sails he had seen at first had vanished as the swift night shut down; but

now he discerned two dim lights in different directions, evidently far away.

He was gazing after them, and looking anxiously for nearer lights or sails, when he was aware of a low, dark object just before him, rising from the deep. What could it be?— with something white flashing upon it! And what was the sound he heard?

“The Cow and Calf!” he exclaimed, with sudden excitement, almost as if he had seen a friend.

## CHAPTER VIII.

## THE COW AND CALF.

THE Old Cow and Calf are two enormous ledges, lying not far asunder, within sight from the coast in clear weather. The Cow is never completely submerged; her bare, brown back appears above the highest tides.

The Calf is not so fortunate: the sea must be very calm at high water when it is not buried in the surf.

Near one end of it, to mark the position of the dangerous reef, a pole is anchored, rising out of the water with a slant that has gained for it the name of the Calf's Tail. Often at high tide only the tail can be seen sticking out of the sea, and wagging up and down with every swell.

What Olly saw and heard was the billows combing over the end of one of these huge rocks. He wondered why he hadn't thought



of them before; for it now occurred to him that if he could land on the Old Cow, he might safely pass the night on her back, and be seen from the shore, or from some passing craft, in the morning.

But which of them was he approaching? Familiar as their forms were to him, seen from the shore, he could not, in his strange position, in the night, and amid the dashing waves, decide whether he was coming upon the Old Cow or the Calf.

Trembling with fresh hope and fear, and paddling cautiously, he strained his eyes in the darkness, to get the broad outline of the back against the faint sky-line. There was something awful in the sound of the surf on those desolate rocks. The surges leaped and fell, rushing along the reef, and pouring in dimly seen cataracts over the ledges, their loud buffets followed by mysterious gurglings and murmurings, which might well appall the heart of a wave-tossed boy.

The wind was blowing him on; but it was still in his power to pass the end of the rock,

or drive his dory upon the windward side, where the ocean swells broke with least force. If he could only be sure which rock it was! But he could distinguish nothing. All was as strange to him as if he had been adrift on the loneliest unknown sea in the world.

If it was the Calf, then the Tail should be at the other end, and the Old Cow beyond. If the Cow, the Calf must be in the other direction, and a little farther seaward; he might pass between the two.

He was getting used to his clumsy paddle; with it he kept his dory off as well as he could, in a state of terrible anxiety, thinking his life might depend on what he should decide to do the next minute. He was still hesitating, when accident decided for him.

The skiff was headed to the wind, against which he continued to paddle, when suddenly a billow shot over a sunken projection of the ledge, smiting the end of the boat with a force that slung it half about in an instant.

Olly felt a small deluge of water dash over and drench him from behind. He was past

thinking of his new clothes now ; he thought of the dory. Even then it might have escaped capsizing, if, at the same time, it had not met a cross wave, which tumbled aboard from the other side.

The two filled it so nearly that the water rushed cold across his knees ; and he knew that nothing he could do would prevent it from sinking. Indeed, the very next wave swept in. The boat settled on one side, and then slowly rolled over. To save himself, Olly sprang up, grasping, first, the uppermost rail, then clinging to the bottom of the overturned skiff, until another billow swept him off.

He was a tolerably good swimmer, as I think I have said before ; and now that skill stood him in good stead. In the first moment of his immersion he lost his bearings ; but, rising with a wave, he looked about him from its crest, and saw the little island not a hundred feet away.

He made for it at once, directing his course to a spot which the overleaping surge did not reach.

The waves were dashing all about the rock,

to be sure; and to land safely upon it at any point would require not only vigilance, but good fortune.

I hardly know whether he was much frightened or not; he himself couldn't have told. He didn't stop for a moment to reason about the situation, but, obeying the mere instinct of self-preservation, he swam to the ledge.

He was lucky enough to find a spot where it sloped gently into the sea. He swam in on a wave, and, as it subsided, clung.

The broken surface of the rock was covered with barnacles, which cut his hands; but he held on. They also scratched his knees through his torn clothing, as he climbed up to the smoother rocks above.

The slant to the water was such that he could not, in the darkness, judge of his elevation above the sea-level; nor determine, from that, whether he had been thrown upon the Old Cow or the Calf.

Yet everything depended upon the answer to that question. If on the greater rock he was comparatively safe; if on the smaller, his

respite would be brief; he might expect the next tide to carry him off.

Groping about on the jagged summit, trying to identify the rock by its form, his foot plashed in a pool of water. He paused, startled by the thought that here was what would decide his fate.

No doubt, much sea-spray dashed upon the backbone of the Old Cow, in rough weather. But copious rains had succeeded the last gale; and, if this pool was on the large rock, it could not be very salt. If on the back of the Calf, it was the leavings of the last tide. He felt that his doom was in the taste of that water.

He hesitated, heaving a sigh of dread, then stooped quickly, and put his hand into the pool. He lifted it to his lips, and immediately grew faint — it was bitterly salt.

Still, after a little reflection, he would not give up all hope. The sea must have broken clear over the Cow's back, in the last storm; and the rain might have had little effect in freshening the contents of the basin. He thought of another test.

Barnacles live on tide-washed rocks, or in receptacles of sea-water replenished at every tide. If on the back of the Old Cow, the pool was free from them; if on the Calf, there would be the usual incrustations about its edges.

Once more he put down his groping hand, and uttered a despairing wail.

The barnacles were there.

## CHAPTER IX.

## LOADING THE KELP.

WITH the first flush of dawn kindling the sky, Perce Bucklin opened his eyes in great bewilderment. But the sight of the sea, and the sand, and his two companions still asleep under their blankets, brought him quickly to his senses.

“Wake, Nicodemus!” he shouted, giving each a shake. “The tide is up! the wind is all right, and the kelp is landing! ‘Hurrah for the great jubilee!’”

Moke yawned a sleepy “hurrah!” while Poke, sitting up and rubbing his eyes open, made some complimentary reference to “Uncle Moses.”

“Uncle Moses was right,” Perce admitted. “Now, we must have breakfast, and be ready for work by the time the tide has gone down

a little. Start up the fire, while I go and see to the oxen."

Rubbish had already been gathered, and left to dry about their camp-fire of the evening before. Moke produced some matches, while Poke prepared a wisp of hay for lighting. And now, completely awake, both sang, while Perce was starting off, —

“ ‘ Run and tell Elijah to hurry up Pomp,  
And meet us at the gum-tree down in the swamp,  
To wake Nicodemus to-day!’ ”

The sun came up gloriously over the ocean. It was a superb morning. The wind had gone down during the night, and only a gentle breeze was blowing. The receding tide left long rows and scattered heaps of kelp, rock-wood, and other *algæ* high on the beach.

The boys were in the gayest spirits. While the oxen were still feeding, and the fire getting in condition to roast corn and potatoes, Perce proposed that they should make the most of their time by gathering driftwood.

Then a question of equity arose. The twins thought it fair that all they two se-



cured should be theirs; by which arrangement Perce could have expected to get no more than half as much for his share.

“But why not divide the floodwood the same as we do the seaweed?” he demanded — “half and half.”

“Because your oxen” — began Moke.

“Don’t help,” added Poke.

“But they’re here on your account as much as they are on mine,” said Perce. “They’re giving their valuable time all the same, whether they help or not.”

“All right! what do you propose?” cried the twins.

“That we divide equally everything we find on the beach, — driftwood, seaweed, no matter what,” Perce replied. “Half for you two, and half for me and the oxen.”

The twins agreed good-naturedly, and all set merrily to work. After gathering driftwood for a while, they dug out a place in the hot coals, into which they put their potatoes, wrapped in green sea-moss, and left them to cook. Then the corn was made ready,

and roasted on the ends of the sticks that had served the same purpose the night before, and at last came breakfast, which they ate with such appetites as I fear some boys who read this know nothing about.

“Won’t Olly be mad when he knows what he has missed?” cried Perce.

They all had to speak loud, to be heard above the sound of the surf.

“If he comes back by the coast” — said Moke.

“We shall see him,” said Poke. “I should think it was time.”

“It’s time to begin on the kelp!” Perce exclaimed, throwing away his last corn-cob, and springing up from his seat on the sand.

The ox-cart was brought around, and halted alongside the heaps of still dripping and glistening seaweed. The larger part of this was kelp, and the most valuable part, in the estimation of farmers who make use of these products of the sea to enrich the land.

The kelp grows upon deep-sunken ledges, from which it is detached only by the agita-

tions of great storms, — a weird sort of plant, which in still weather may sometimes be seen, far down, waving mysteriously, with every fluctuation of the tide, in the silent ocean depths. It is often of gigantic proportions, its slippery stems and great, glossy leaves measuring many yards in length. It frequently comes up with clusters of blue mussels and other shells clinging to its roots.

With the kelp were mixed tangled rockweed, eel-grass, and Irish moss; all of which the boys pitched on the cart together, Perce starting up the oxen now and then, and stopping them where the litter was thickest.

“How’s this for a devil’s apron?” cried Poke, struggling with an immense leaf of kelp, to which he merely gave the picturesque popular name; for the twins were well-brought-up boys, who would not for anything have uttered a profane word.

It fopped salt water in his face as he was getting it on the cart; and then, as the oxen started forward, trailed its smooth, wet, snaky stem along the ground.

"It's ugly stuff to pitch," said Moke, twisting the root in the tines of his fork to assist his brother.

"It's strange that it always lands against the wind!" said Poke.

"I don't see that it's strange at all," replied Perce. "The only things that the wind from the sea blows ashore are things afloat on the surface, like driftwood. It blows the surface water, too, but that is all the time running back; and it carries with it things below the surface."

"Of course! I know all about that!" said Poke.

"The under-tow," suggested Moke.

"Well! it's the under-tow that lands the kelp," returned Perce. "It works both ways. When the wind blows off shore, it blows the surface water back; and that brings up the under-current with the seaweed. That's the way it is, on our beaches."

Moke and Poke knew the facts well enough; but Perce, who prided himself on being a rather intelligent boy, liked to explain things. He went on:

“There’s another thing you’ve noticed: how much warmer the water is sometimes, when there’s a sea-breeze, than when it blows off the land: just the contrary of what you would expect.”

“I guess every fellow that goes in swimming much” — Moke began.

“Has noticed that,” Poke ended.

“It’s because the sea-breeze is cooler than the land-breeze,” said Moke.

“And that makes the water seem warm to you,” said Poke.

“There’s something besides that,” Perce replied. “It’s the surface water that is warmest, and the sea-breeze keeps that rolling on the beach. I’m speaking of sunny days; in cloudy weather there isn’t much difference. The sun warms the sand, and the sand warms the water. But a land-breeze blows it off, and brings up the cold under-current. Think of that the next time you go in swimming, and see if it isn’t so.”

The twins thought it strange he should know so much, as he had no Uncle Moses.

He didn't tell them he had got his lore from his father, who was one of the most intelligent farmers on the coast.

"I shouldn't like to go in swimming here, now!" said Poke, turning to look at the waves, still dark with rolling seaweed and sand.

"It's wonderful," said Perce, "how pure the ocean keeps, with all the dirt and things forever washing into it—though it isn't always so pure as it looks. Don't you know that fishermen have to take up their gill-nets and dry 'em about every four days?"

"That's to keep 'em from rotting," said the twins.

"But what makes them rot?" returned Perce. "It isn't the water; it's what's *in* the water."

"The slime," said Moke.

"They come up all covered with slime," said Poke.

"That slime," Perce replied, "is all a kind of life. Drying kills it. But if the nets are left long in the water, it grows, and takes the

life out of 'em ; that's what you call rotting. In a few days you can see fine green grass growing all over the twine. Then, how quick the bottom of a boat, or a rope left in the water, or a sunken anchor, gets coated with barnacles. The clearest sea-water is swarming alive with things you can't see !”

## CHAPTER X.

## WHAT PERCE FOUND ON THE BEACH.

THE boys worked well while they talked; and often the cart went with its shaggy and dripping load to the two piles of seaweed they were depositing high on the shore.

“Have you thought, boys,” said Perce, as he backed the cart around, after one of these short trips, “it’s just along here somewhere that the body of the old lobsterman came ashore, after the gale, three years ago?”

All stopped to look at the tumbling breakers, still casting up their burden of kelp.

“The storm caught him when he was out,” continued Perce; “but nobody ever knew whether he got capsized pulling his lobster-pots, or trying to land afterward. His boat was found stove to pieces on the rocks the next morning, but he wasn’t found for several days. Then, wasn’t it dreadful? Two



men discovered him when they were loading kelp!"

The boys worked for some time in silence, and then the conversation turned upon wrecks and accidents at sea, until the cart-box was once more filled with its heaping load.

This time the twins went with the oxen to dump it, while Perce stood leaning on his fork, looking down at the last marks of the receding tide, left in wavy lines along the sand.

Where some jags of seaweed had just been thrown up, these lines disappeared, giving place to little, straight channels, cut by the water dripping from them, and running back to catch the retreating waves. He was curiously watching these effects, and throwing up some straggling stems of kelp with his fork, when he stopped suddenly with a start of surprise. Something brighter than the glistening golden-green leaves and stems had caught his eye. It was in the midst of a heap which had hardly yet landed, and which seemed ready to slide back into the sea with the

next wave. He thrust in his fork to hold it; and, stooping, saw that the object was a bit of shining metal.

“Gold!” he exclaimed gleefully.

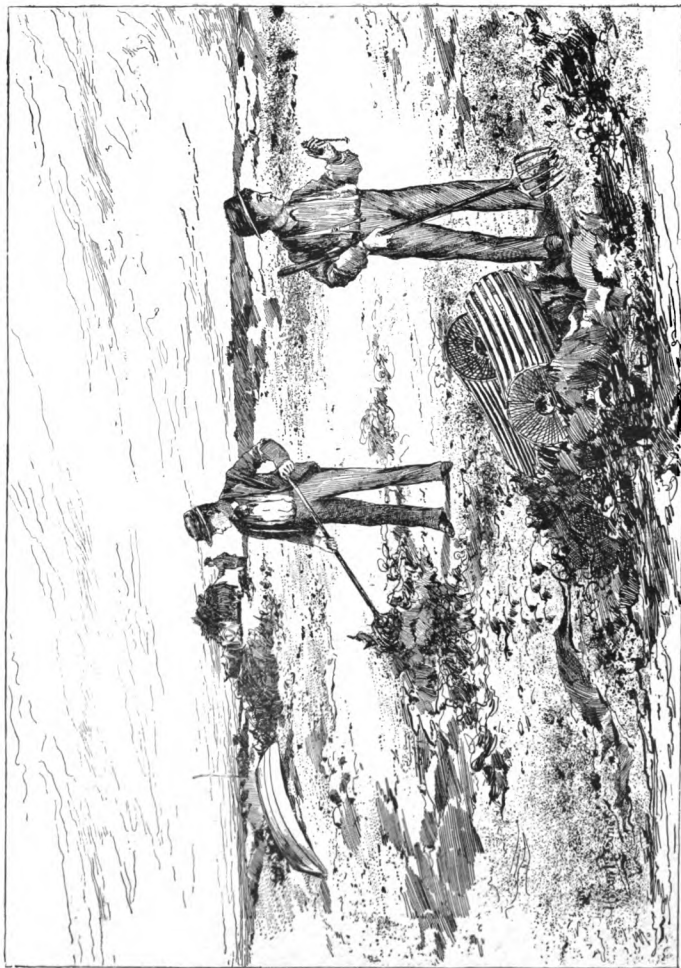
He took hold of it, but found that it did not come so easily out of the mingled mass of kelp and rockweed as he had anticipated. He pinched it firmly, pushing back some clustering pods of rockweed, and gave it a gentle pull.

“A gold chain!” he exclaimed in the greatest astonishment.

He had at first seen and touched only the end of the chain. But now he drew and drew, removing the soft, slimy incumbrance with his other hand, when up came, dangling before his eyes in the sun, a beautiful gold watch.

Perce Bucklin’s first impulse was to shout to his companions, and hold up the prize for them to see; but that natural movement was checked by a more selfish consideration.

He was too honest a boy to wish to possess anything that did not truly belong to him.



A BEAUTIFUL GOLD WATCH. — Page 78.



But suppose the owner of the watch should never appear? It might have been lost at sea, in the late storm; or, possibly, before that, it slipped from the pocket of some voyager on yacht or ship who would never pass that way again. Indeed, it might have been dropped overboard miles from that spot, and have been brought ashore by the kelp in which the chain was entangled.

If unclaimed, who would have a better right to it than the finder? But then Perce remembered the unlucky agreement by which everything they found that day on the beach was to be divided between him and the twins. To be sure, that was meant to apply principally to seaweed and driftwood; of course, it didn't include watches! That seemed very plain to Percival Bucklin. Yet the twins might think differently. It would be absurd; but who could tell what self-interest might impel them to do?

It was this fear that prompted Perce to resolve upon a very foolish thing. He glanced around, and, seeing that the twins had just

dumped their load, and were lifting the cart-box back into its place, having quite too much to attend to at the moment to be observing him, he slipped watch and chain into his trousers pocket. It had a hunter's case, which, if it had so far kept it from being broken, would probably preserve it still.

"I won't tell them," he said to himself, "till I've had a little time to think."

He was much excited; and if the twins had had keen eyes for anything that wasn't lying on the beach, they must have noticed, when they returned, that something had happened to him in their absence.

He fell to pitching kelp again; but his talk was fitful and absent-minded. He was all the while thinking of what he had found, and instinctively looking for more watches and other valuables in the seaweed.

He also thought of something he wouldn't have liked so well to find. The loser of the watch might have lost himself with it; and perhaps he, too, like the old lobsterman, had come ashore in a shroud of kelp.

## CHAPTER XI.

## ANOTHER DISCOVERY.

PERCE'S eyes wandered up and down the beach, and finally, with thoughts of shipwreck, he stood leaning on his fork, and gazed abstractedly out to sea.

"What's the matter with you?" cried Moke.

"Why don't you start up the team?" demanded Poke. "We're waiting!"

Perce left his fork sticking in the sand, and, starting suddenly with his face turned toward the sea, uttered an exclamation:—

"My gracious, boys! Look!"

"Where? What?" cried the twins.

"On the Old Cow! There's somebody there!"

"That's nothing strange," Moke replied.

"Some fisherman," Poke added.

They took the discovery coolly, not having

Perce's reason for attaching to it a tragical importance.

"It's no fisherman!" he exclaimed. "See! he is making some sort of signal!" And he added, in great excitement, "It's somebody cast away on the rock! There's been a wreck, boys! There's been a wreck!"

He was so certain of this that he would have told them then and there what he had found on the beach, but for the awkwardness of explaining why he had previously concealed it. And, after all, he reflected, the castaway — if such indeed he was — might not be the loser of the watch.

Without producing that evidence, he soon convinced his companions that there had been some sort of disaster off the coast, and that the movements they saw on the Old Cow's back were signals of distress.

"He has a board or something in his hand, and he is beckoning with it!" cried Perce. "He wouldn't be waving it that way, if he wasn't in trouble!"

"I don't see what *we* can do," said Moke.



“He can't be in any great danger,” added Poke.

“But he may have been there all night; we don't know what condition he is in!” Perce replied. “We can give the alarm, and, maybe, go for him ourselves, if nobody else will.”

The twins didn't see how they could afford to leave their work. There was another cart already at the other end of the beach, and more kelp-gatherers would probably be coming soon. They didn't fancy the idea of giving up the advantage gained by spending the night on the shore, and beginning work in the morning before anybody else arrived.

But, though Perce could do a rather underhand thing in keeping the watch from them, he wasn't a boy to let that, or any other selfish consideration, prevent him from attempting the rescue of a person in distress.

“Besides,” he said, “it may be somebody we know. Don't you remember when that man was seen clinging to the rigging of the wreck off Rocky Shoals, Tom Bowers was one of the men that volunteered to launch a boat, and try

to take him off? Tom's mother said all she could to prevent him, for there was a tremendous sea running, but he went; and the man turned out to be his own father—her own husband! and the only one saved from the wreck."

The twins remarked that it wasn't any father of theirs on the Old Cow's back, at that time in the morning, very sure! And they were reluctant to have their rich harvest of seaweed interrupted. Yet they thought something ought to be done.

"Call out and tell old Homans," they said.

"Old Homans" was the man who had come on at the other end of the beach with his cart. But Perce didn't see what he could do.

"He might do what we do; then he won't be getting seaweed while we're off," said the twins.

"Well, you can tell him, while I run up to the boarding-house," cried Perce. "Here's a boat; I'll get oars, and, maybe, some men to help."

Old Homans didn't take much interest in

the report the twins brought him of a human being on the lonely outlying ledge.

“Big ninny! He’s no business to be there!” he exclaimed.

He spent but little time in trying to concentrate his imperfect eyesight upon the figure they described.

“I can’t make out any human critter, nor any critter,” he said, and turned again to forking seaweed. “If *you* see anybody, better find a boat and pull out, and see what simpleton it is, and what in the world he’s there for.”

The twins returned to their own ox-cart; and soon Perce came running with a pair of oars.

“Here are oars,” he said. “But there are no men at the house. They went off in the yacht *Susette* yesterday, and haven’t been heard from. And Olly hasn’t got back, though Mrs. Murcher says he ought to have come an hour ago.”

“Maybe it’s the yacht that’s been wrecked,” suggested the twins.

“She’s afraid it is; and the ladies are all excited about it. I tried to get a spy-glass to look through; one of the men owns one, they said, but he must have taken it with him.”

The boys turned the oxen about, and left them eating the hay that had served for a bed the night before. Then they dragged the dory down from beside the bathing-houses, and got it ready to launch. Perce took the precaution to put on board some provisions, and selected from the piles of driftwood a strip of board that would do to steer with.

Then the boat was shoved into the surf. The twins scrambled aboard, and took the oars, ready to pull the moment Perce gave the word.

“Now!” he cried; and, pushing the dory over the next wave, he at the same time leaped into the stern.

The oars dipped and bent; he assisted with his strip of board; and the skiff reared and pitched on the breakers, cheered by the ladies from the boarding-house, who had hastened down to the beach to see them off.

The twins, having embarked in the adventure, were now almost as enthusiastic as Perce himself. The wind was light, the morning sun sparkled on the waves, and the dory went dashing over them as if rowed for a race.

The tide had not yet fallen much, and the ocean swells broke in a field of white foam completely over the Calf's back, while the tail wagged up and down. But the Old Cow was clear above the line of surf about her flanks; and there, on the highest hummock, stood the castaway, now more distinctly discernible as the distance between him and his rescuers diminished.

The boys made many conjectures as to who he could be and what had become of the wreck, no vestige of which could be seen.

"He has on a white yachting-cap!" exclaimed Perce; and that confirmed them in the opinion that the Susette had gone to pieces on the ledge. The castaway had ceased to wave the object which had first attracted Perce's attention, but every now and then he threw up both arms, as he stood facing them

on the solitary rock, and made encouraging signals.

The Cow and the Calf are much farther from the coast than they look to be in clear weather. Perce took his turn at the oars, and all worked heroically; yet it seemed a long while before they came within hail of the Crusoe of that small rocky island.

## CHAPTER XII.

## ON THE CALF'S BACK.

LET us take advantage of this lapse of time to go back a little, and see what had become of Olly Burdeen.

The salt water and the barnacles told but too true a tale: he had been thrown upon the lesser rock, which the next tide would over-sweep.

If he had still any doubt of that terrible fact, it must have been dispelled when the moon rose amid broken clouds, and showed him the Calf's tail churning the waves at the end of his surf-fringed reef; also the glimmering back of the Old Cow, with its encircling surge, a furlong or more to the south.

An old, sad moon it was, with a distorted, melancholy face peering above the illimitable desolation of waters; yet a welcome sight to

the drenched and shivering castaway, waiting on his lonely ledge for the tide to return and cover it. No wonder it appeared to him not the cheerful orb he knew, but some ancient decayed satellite coming to look for the last time on a lost world!

After his long labor with his rude paddle, and the effort it had cost to swim to the rock, and scramble out upon it, he was nearly exhausted; and the discovery of barnacles in the pool had quenched what remained of his courage. There was no shelter from the wind; and in his wet clothes he felt a deadly chill striking to his bones.

Then followed another discovery, which did not tend to restore his spirits.

He had from the first given up the boat as lost. It had disappeared in the dark and turbulent water almost as soon as he left it; nor could he see anything of it afterward.

It was an old dory that had been hired for the season by one of Mrs. Murcher's boarders. Olly had taken that, too, without leave; but it was the custom on the coast for people



to make rather free use of any boats that came in their way. With it had gone his sole means of escape from certain death; otherwise, he would have cared little for the loss.

In his fearful anxiety about his own safety, he had thought little even of the safety of the watch. He hated the recollection of it; for, probably, if it had not been for that, it might never have occurred to him to row out from shore, in order to get a sight of the returning yacht around the point.

After the moon rose, he looked across the tumbling billows at the Old Cow wallowing in their froth, and felt that his salvation lay in reaching that before the rising tide should sweep him from the Calf. Yet, how was that possible? The very thought of swimming so far, alone in the night, in the wild ocean, was frightful to him. Yet, as a last resort, he might be driven to make so desperate an attempt.

As for the water, it could hardly seem colder than the wind that pierced his drenched clothes. He no longer thought of any injury

to them — the stylish suit that had been a delight to his soul a few hours before! He wept with despair as he thought of the joy that had turned to such bitter woe; and he wished he had never seen the giver or his gift.

Salt water might ruin the watch; but, if so, that was probably ruined already. At all events, it was past being returned to its case in Mr. Hatville's room, without that gentleman's knowledge of its having been removed.

Past, indeed! Thinking of it, Olly put up his hand to his pocket. It gave him a start of fresh terror, even in his utter misery and wretchedness, to find it empty.

The watch was gone! That was his last disheartening discovery.

How long it had been gone he had not the slightest means of knowing. His teeth chattered, and he trembled from head to foot, as he hurriedly searched his clothing for the timepiece, but in vain.

He at first believed that he had lost it in his struggle between the boat and the ledge;

for he remembered having looked down and seen the golden glitter of the seal, not long after he went adrift. But now the moonlight disclosed the seal still hanging by the hook in his button-hole. The guard had been broken, and everything, excepting the seal and a few dangling links, had gone with the watch.

He concluded that he must have lost it when he had his first tumble in the boat. The oar, when it struck his breast, and flew from his hand, had, doubtless, caught in the chain, and snatched the watch from his pocket. Of course, he couldn't know that this was so; but if he had foreseen what Perce Bucklin was to find on the beach a few hours later, he would have argued that no watch could have been conveyed so far, in so short a time, by waves or tide.

However it might have happened, it was hopelessly gone; and now, in his enfeebled, frightened state, he began to consider how he should escape the suspicion of having stolen it, if ever his body reached the shore, alive or dead.

“Nobody knows I had it,” he said miserably to himself. “And why should anybody ever know?”

He unhooked what was left of the guard, and held it, with the seal, for a moment in his shaking fingers, considering whether he should destroy that evidence against him by flinging it into the sea.

But he could hardly make up his mind to cast away irrevocably what might prove of value, should the watch and the rest of the guard be found. That might still be possible, he reasoned; and, after a few minutes of sickening doubt and hesitation, he put the shining trinkets into his pocket. Even as he did so, he went about mechanically searching for what he had hardly the faintest expectation of finding. Who that has ever lost a prized object has not done the same?—looking again and again in places where a superstitious hope whispers that it may be mysteriously lurking.

He felt sure that it could not, without his knowledge, have dropped from his pocket

when he had stooped over the pool to grope for barnacles; and even if it had, the moonlight must show so bright an object shining in the shallow bottom. Yet he explored it carefully with his hands, and went back and explored it again, after examining other parts of the ledge.

But why be so anxious about the watch when he was in despair of saving his own life? He said that to himself, as he searched every crevice and hollow of the slope where he had crawled out of the sea.

It was fortunate that he had something thus to engage his wretched thoughts and benumbed hands. And a still better employment awaited him.

He had some time before heard a strange thumping and grinding sound, which he supposed must be caused by the motion of the Calf's tail.

The hunt for the watch had kept him from investigating it. But now that very search led him to make a different, but even more welcome, discovery.

The side where he had landed was in shadow. As he followed it around, just out of reach of the waves, he saw, to his great joy, something rising and falling in the black seaweed that grew below the gray girdle of barnacles, and bumping on the reef. It was his boat, which the wind had blown against the little island, and lodged not far from the Calf's tail.

It was lying on its side, and a heave of the sea threw up the dark gunwale into the moonlight that slanted across the surf-vexed end of the island. As the wave drew back, sucking heavily along with it the sombre fringe of rockweed, Olly stepped cautiously down on this slippery footing, and, seizing the rail of the dory, held it fast. Then, with the next swell, he lifted the end upon the barnacled rocks, and held it again, while its heavy freight of water spilled out over the side into the sea.

Getting hold of the painter, he now had the boat safe, and, by a little management, he was able to haul it higher up the slope,

and tip the rest of the water out. The exertion warmed him, and success gave him new courage.

True, he had no oars, and the thwart he had used for a paddle was lost. But there was a second thwart, which he could detach. The dory appeared little the worse for the rough usage it had received, and he did not doubt but it would prove seaworthy when it should become necessary for him to intrust his life to it, in escaping from the rock.

That might be some time yet, for it was now low water. With the turning of the tide, the wind might change or go down; and it would probably be near daylight before the Calf would be submerged.

"The trouble will be," he reflected, "to get the dory upon that highest part."

That was something more for him to do. He worked it along inch by inch, pulling seaweed from the rocks to put under it in order to make it slide easily over the barnacles.

But this device came near causing him a sad accident. Once, when he released his hold

of the boat to take breath after violently lifting, it broke away from him, and started back down the descent, which the seaweed he had placed there made slippery. He sprang to seize the painter, which was dragging on the rocks; but it pulled him after, and boy and boat barely escaped plunging together into the brine.

As it was, he arrested its progress just as it struck a billow. He was compelled once more to tip it over—for he had no other means of getting the water out—and then to perform over again the labor of lifting it up the ledge.

But this was, perhaps, a fortunate accident, since it kept him in exercise until he felt that his clothes were getting dry. And it showed him, besides, the danger that would attend the final launching of the dory.





“BOY AND BOAT SCARCELY ESCAPED PLUNGING INTO THE BRINE.” — Page 98.



## CHAPTER XIII.

## ON THE OLD COW'S BACK.

ONCE more in the boat's stern with his steering paddle, Perce Bucklin gazed eagerly over the bobbing heads of the twins who were rowing, and reported his observations, as they approached the castaway on the back of the Old Cow.

"It's nobody I can make out," he said, when near enough to recognize, as he believed, any person he knew. "But that isn't a yachting-cap he has on; it's a handkerchief tied around his head. The sun on the water dazzles me or I — Boys," he suddenly exclaimed, "it isn't a man! It's a boy!"

And he shouted, "Hello, there!"

The castaway returned the hail, and, as the boat came nearer, cried out, —

"That you, Perce Bucklin?"

Then Perce uttered an ejaculation of the greatest astonishment: —

“Boys, it’s Olly Burdeen!”

“No!” — “Jingo!” — “You don’t say!” exclaimed the twins, who wouldn’t believe him until they turned their heads and saw for themselves.

“Hullo, Olly!” called Moke.

“How did you ever get there?” asked Poke.

“Pull, boys!” said Perce impatiently, as they held their oars while looking around. “He must have been aboard the yacht,” for as yet Olly made no answer. He was, in fact, too much agitated with joy and gratitude, after his long hours of suffering in mind and body, to make any coherent explanations.

The dory came dancing over the waves.

“Where’s the yacht?” Perce demanded.

“I don’t know anything about any yacht,” answered the miserable, happy Olly, stepping down to the water’s edge to meet his deliverers.

“Hasn’t the Susette been lost?” Perce inquired.

As he was still some little distance away, and the waves were dashing on the rocks, all Olly understood was something about the Susette being lost.

It gave him a shock, with which, however, came a gleam of consolation. Mr. Hatville, then, had not returned home.

I will do Olly the justice to say that he could not, under any circumstances, have rejoiced at such a disaster as the wreck of the yacht; yet it was some comfort to think that the loss of the watch had not yet been discovered.

"I haven't heard of it!" Olly said in a shaky voice.

"Then how in the world did you get where you are?" inquired Perce. And as Olly was too much overcome by his feelings to answer at once, he continued, "We concluded you must have been aboard of the Susette. Where's the best place to take you on?"

"Right here," said Olly. "But I've a boat, too, around on the other side. I'd like to save that."

“A boat!” Moke exclaimed. “Then, why in the name of common sense” —

“Why didn’t you go ashore?” cried Poke.

“It leaks, and I haven’t any oars nor anything to bail with. It was all I could do to get over here in it, without sinking. I was on the Calf’s back till the waves began to break over it this morning.”

Here a sob caught poor Olly’s voice, at the recollection of all he had gone through.

“On the Calf!” said Perce. “How did it happen? But never mind about that till we get you out of your scrape.”

The dory pulled around the Old Cow, while Olly scrambled over the back, picking up on his way the second thwart, which he had used to paddle with, and afterward in making his signals of distress.

On the seaward side was a cleft in the rock, into which he had propelled his dory on the top of a wave, and where, leaping to the ledges, he had held it by the painter while the wave went out. There it was still, jammed high up in the chasm, where the buffets of the tide had left it.

Olly alone could never have got it without waiting for the next tide to help him; it was all his companions could do to loosen and lift it from those rocky jaws. This they did, after effecting a landing on the little islet; while Olly, who acknowledged himself half starved, ate some of the provisions they had brought, and between mouthfuls told his surprising story.

One very important particular, however, he took care not to mention, so that no light was thrown upon the mystery of the watch which had found its resting-place in Perce Bucklin's pocket.

It would be hard to say whether this was a disappointment or a relief to the finder. He had so fully persuaded himself that there was some connection between the watch picked up on the beach and the human being cast on the rock, that he could not easily give it up, even after discovering who that human being was.

True, Olly was not a very probable owner of such a timepiece. Yet that was not an impossible thing; at any rate, he might know

something about it. Perce was anxious to solve the riddle, even if it should be at his own cost; for he had no wish, as I have said before, to keep what belonged to another.

“I didn’t know you in that suit of clothes, Olly,” he said, as they were getting the boat out of the crevice, “and with that handkerchief on your head! I never saw such a change in anybody, — did you, boys?”

“He looks as pinched as if the lobsters had been nipping him,” said Moke.

“And as blue about the gills as a turkey-gobbler,” said Poke.

“I lost my hat overboard last night,” said Olly. “I tied on my handkerchief this morning, after I got tired of waving it. I thought you would be more apt to see the board. Wasn’t I missed? Wasn’t anybody looking for me?”

“No,” Perce replied. “The young lady with the nose — the tall one — said you went with the yachters.”

“She!” exclaimed Olly, who still had feelings left that could be hurt by such evidence



of Amy Canfield's utter indifference to him. "She knew better than that."

"Mrs. Murcher knew better," said Perce. "She thought you had gone home to show your new suit to the folks. Did the boarder make you any other present?"

"Wasn't that enough?" returned Olly, munching a cold, boiled egg.

"It will do for a beginning," said Perce. "But with such a suit as that, it seems as if you ought to have a handsome — watch-chain; needn't mind about any watch," he added with a laugh, intending thus to make a jest of his remark, if Olly didn't take it in earnest.

Poor Olly tried to smile with his pinched, empurpled face; at the same time casting down his eyes in some alarm, to see what there was about his dress to put such a notion into Perce's head.

"Olly doesn't feel like joking," observed Moke.

"Neither would you, I guess!" exclaimed Olly, glad to change the subject. "All night on the rocks, except when I was paddling or

swimming for my life. No fire, not a mouthful to eat, not a wink of sleep! I got wet through a second time, getting over here from the Calf, in a sinking boat. I can't tell you how it made me feel, boys, to see your fire on the beach last night and again this morning! Why didn't you see me? I tried the handkerchief, and then the board, but I thought you never would look!"

"We were too far off," said Poke.

"We were too busy minding our own business," said Moke.

"That reminds me, the seaweed is waiting for us," said Poke. "Hurry up, boys!"

Perce was the last to leave the island; and he himself got wet up to his waist by a wave, in preventing the boat from being dashed upon the rocks after the others were aboard.

He did not care for a little salt water himself. But he thought of the watch in the pocket of his trousers. That, however, would probably not be much hurt by a few additional drops after what it had been through already. As far as he was concerned, the mystery had

not been cleared up at all as he expected it would be, by the rescue of the castaway.

If Olly had frankly told his entire story, how gladly would Perce have taken the treasure-trove from his pocket, and held it out to him, exclaiming, "Here is your watch, boy!" rejoicing his eyes with the sight. But as it was, both were silent on the subject which now filled both their minds.

Olly had already learned from his companions that their only reason for thinking the yacht had been wrecked was the fact of its not having returned the night before, and the appearance, that morning, of a human form on the outlying rock — excepting always the very private reason in Perce Bucklin's trousers pocket.

Mr. Hatville was then most likely still undrowned; and now that his own life was saved, Olly began to study how he should shirk the responsibility of his guilty borrowing, — in his troubled thoughts looking every way except the right way, and inventing plausible fictions, where nothing would avail like the simple

truth. He sat in the stern of his companions' dory, leading his own in tow by the painter; dejected and silent, and more than once thinking he would watch for a chance, when nobody was observing him, to drop overboard the watch-seal and the fragment of chain which he still carried in his vest.

## CHAPTER XIV.

## OLLY HAS A BAD DREAM.

LONG before the rescuers and the rescued reached the shore with their leaky boat in tow, the excitement among Mrs. Murcher's boarders in regard to the yacht had been allayed by a telegram. The adverse wind of the evening before had caused the *Susette* to put into Portland; whence some of the party were to return by rail that morning.

So said the message; in consequence of which interest in the unknown individual on the back of the Old Cow languished somewhat, until the arrival of the little party on the beach. Then it went up to the bubbling point again; and there was the liveliest effervescence of curiosity to know how Olly Burdeen, the faithful, unromantic chore and errand boy, had met with so wonderful an adventure.

Accompanied, or preceded, by those who

had gone down to see him disembark, he mounted, with slow, miserable, anxious feet, the piazza-steps.

There all the other ladies came out eagerly to meet him, and pressed around, marvelling and questioning; and Mrs. Murcher, flushed from her moulding-board, held up both her doughy hands.

“Why, Olly! where *have* you been?” said one.

“In his new suit of clothes!” said another.

“The first time he ever wore them!” exclaimed a third.

And one laughed; the one, of all, whom Olly most dreaded to have see him in that plight.

It was not an ill-natured laugh, by any means; and she would have helped it if she could. But Amy Canfield had a merry disposition. And Olly, after his night of terror and fatigue, still oppressed with a horrible anxiety, humbled, drooping, rolling his distressed eyes in fear of encountering Mr. Hatville's, with the handkerchief still on his head, and his new clothes torn at the knees,

—it must be owned that Olly did look ridiculous.

“Why, Amy!” said Mrs. Merriman, “how *can* you laugh?”

“It’s so funny!” replied the tall brunette; “and I’m so glad he’s rescued,” she added discreetly. “We all were so anxious, thinking the Susette had gone on the rocks; and it was only our Olly after all.”

“What *has* happened to you, Olly?” cried Mrs. Murcher, amazed to the end of her doughy fingers.

“I just went out to take a little row, last evening,” murmured the forlorn Olly. “I lost one oar; it got tangled in the kelp, and a wave wrenched it out of my hand. Then I broke another, and the wind blew me off shore.”

“And you’ve been all night on the Old Cow?” said the good landlady.

“Worse than that,” said Olly. “I was on the Calf; and a part of the time in the water. I guess if anybody had been there on the Calf’s back in my place—alone—such a

night!—waiting for the tide to rise and cover 'em—I guess they wouldn't have thought it much of a joke!" And Olly's voice broke.

"It must have been terrible, Olly! Do forgive my laughing!" said Amy, relenting. "How did you get to the Old Cow?"

Olly faltered forth more of his wretched story, which was listened to with many an expression of surprise and sympathy, for he was rather a favorite with Mrs. Murcher and her lady boarders.

He had wished to go directly home to Frog End, and had tried to induce the boys to carry him over in the ox-cart. But they were in haste to resume their work, which had been too long interrupted already; and they could not see why he should object to returning to the boarding-house.

After all, he thought to himself, the dreaded inquiry regarding the watch might as well be met first as last.

The kindness he received made him feel more miserably remorseful and apprehensive than ever, for he knew that it was lavished



upon him because his friends were still ignorant of what might at any minute now come to their knowledge.

He was really worn out with the long, fearful strain on his mind and strength, and he was quite willing to accept Mrs. Murcher's advice that he should go at once to bed, and "take something hot."

The nucleus of the boarding-house was, as we have said, an old farm-house, which accounted for its not very sightly situation, there in a hollow of the hills. Besides the spacious addition, the original building remained, and at the end of the upper corridor was the old attic, with two or three steps descending to the door.

Olly's room was there, and there he was soon in bed, with ample leisure to think over the terrible part of his experience which was happily past, and the part which was unhappily to come.

He had not ventured to ask about the yacht-party, lest something concerning the watch should come out. But he had accidentally

overheard some one speak of the Susette having run into Portland. Everything else was uncertain. But, thankful for a reprieve, however brief, from the impending catastrophe, he ate the steaming gruel Mrs. Murcher brought him, sank into a state of stupor, and was soon rehearsing in dreams his dire adventures.

He was having a distressing conversation with a dog-fish of enormous size. The monster came up out of the sea, and, resting its elbow on the Calf's shoulder, and its face on its hand — a face and attitude grotesquely suggestive of Mr. Hatville — accused Olly of having one of that gentleman's eyes in his pocket, although there were two spectral eyes as big as watches in the speaker's head at the moment. The dispute was growing frightfully loud, when Olly cut it short by kicking the dog-fish, or Mr. Hatville, or whoever it was, back into the sea, and immediately woke.

## CHAPTER XV.

## IT WAS NOT A DOG-FISH.

It is generally a very good way to get out of trouble, to wake, and find it a dream. But that did not serve Olly's turn this time. The voice was still heard, louder and louder, not in the sea, as he had fancied, but behind the door which separated his garret from the corridor.

"I paid two hundred and forty dollars for that watch, and fifteen dollars for the chain, let alone the seal, and I want to know who has them!"

It was Mr. Hatville's voice pure and simple, without any fishy element about it. At the same time a good pair of boots, such as no dog-fish ever wore, were tramping excitedly across the floor. Poor Mrs. Murcher's anxious, protesting voice was heard in reply, but

not loud enough for Olly to make out the words.

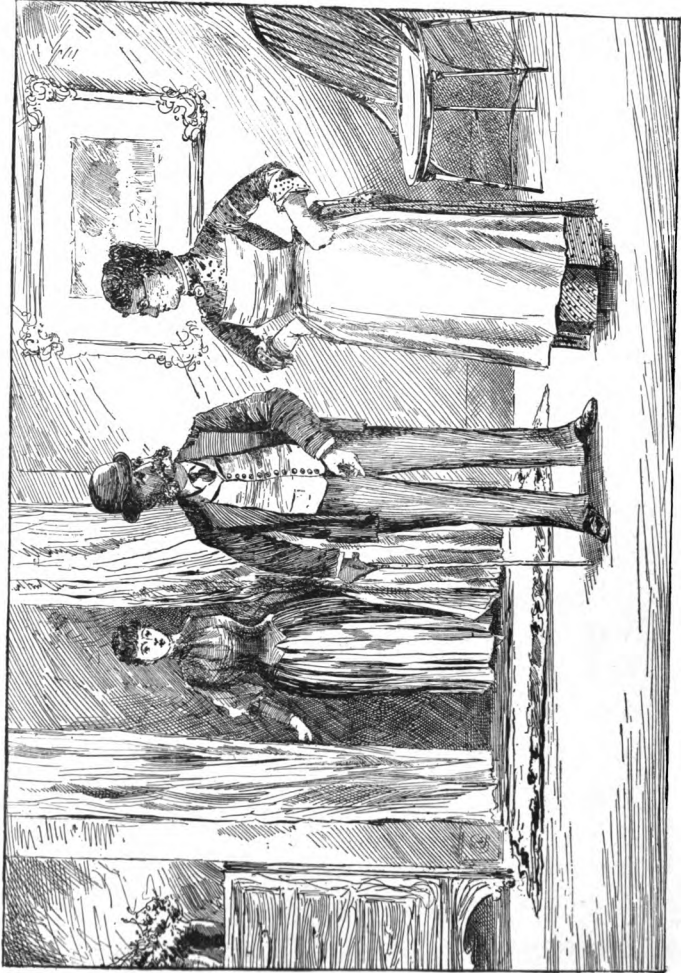
“I hung it up when I was changing my clothes, and then went off and forgot it!” burst forth the male voice again. “But I supposed it would be safe here. I didn’t know you had thieves in your house, Mrs. Murcher!”

“I haven’t, sir! unless they are among your own friends,” the landlady answered in a higher key than before. “I don’t believe it is stolen. It must be somewhere!”

“Of course it’s somewhere!” the boarder retorted — “somewhere in some rogue’s keeping. I’d like to see the fellow who dared to lay hands on it — the best timekeeper I ever saw! Stem-winder; chronometer movement; heavy, fine gold case! I had it regulated down to the finest point: it was losing only about a second and a half a month.”

Other voices here joined in; the corridor appeared to be filling with boarders, all excited by the news of Mr. Hatville’s loss.

“No,” said that gentleman; “I wasn’t at



"I DIDN'T KNOW YOU HAD THIEVES IN YOUR HOUSE." — Page 116.



all anxious about it; only, when I found we couldn't get back last night, I was vexed to think it would run down. I wouldn't have had that happen for five dollars. Where's Olly?" he demanded. "*He* must know something about it."

Olly trembled in his bed. He would have preferred just then to take his chances with a whole school of dog-fishes, of the largest size, rather than confront the wrathful owner of the watch.

"I don't think he knows anything about it," said Mrs. Murcher, now quite near Olly's door. "He has been away all night; he has had a terrible time out at sea—in the sea—and on the rocks. Don't disturb him! He's fast asleep."

"If he hasn't slept for a week, and can't sleep again for a fortnight," cried Hatville, "I'll have him up, and see if he knows anything about that watch."

"Let me speak to him," said Mrs. Murcher. "You've no idea how weak and tired and worn out he is. I've got him into a perspiration,

and now, if it is checked, I shall expect nothing in the world but that he will have a fit of sickness, and maybe never get over it."

"It ought not to check an honest boy's perspiration to tell what he knows about my chronometer," Hatville muttered, while Mrs. Murcher, stepping down the two or three stairs that led to the old attic, opened Olly's door.

"Sh!" she whispered gently, motioning Mr. Hatville back. "He's so sound asleep! It's such a pity to wake him, poor boy! But I suppose I must."

Olly lay with his back toward her, his head and face covered by the sheet. His perspiration hadn't ceased, by any means; he felt that he was fast dissolving in a clammy feeling of abject fear.

"He's in such a beautiful, dewy, childlike, innocent sleep," said the motherly Mrs. Murcher, laying her hand softly on his brow. "Just the thing he needs; better than all the medicine in the world!" She was tempted to add, "or than all the watches!"

Still Hatville did not relent. Without



strongly suspecting Olly of taking the watch, he was yet determined to pursue his investigations, even if he broke the most beautiful, dewy, childlike, innocent slumber on earth.

“Shake him!” he said.

So Mrs. Murcher shook, gently at first, then more and more vigorously, saying, “Olly! Oliver! Olly Burdeen! Oliver Burdeen!” more and more loudly in his ear, until he suddenly sprang up with a muttered cry.

“Stop that boat! stop that—she’s running on the Old Cow! O boys!—where am I?”

And, appearing to recognize Mrs. Murcher’s presence for the first time, he rolled up his eyes, and sank back with a groan on the pillow.

## CHAPTER XVI.

## A BAD AWAKING.

"HE's delirious!" whispered the landlady.

"He's dreaming!" replied the boarder.

"Olly! Wake up a minute! What's become of my watch?"

"Watch?" repeated Olly, still disguising his real fears in a well-feigned fictitious terror. "What watch? I thought I was in the water again!"

His voice trembled, though not altogether from that more remote cause which he desired to impress upon the minds of spectators.

"My watch, which I left hanging in the case beside my bureau when I went yachting yesterday," said Hatville, as much imposed upon as the sympathizing Mrs. Murcher herself. "What has become of it?"

"Your watch?" Olly repeated, with a bewildered air, as if beginning dimly to compre-

hend the question. "How should I know? I've been away. I've been wrecked. Haven't they told you?"

"You haven't the watch, *have* you?" exclaimed the landlady.

"His watch? Mr. Hatville's? Of course, I haven't. What should I have his watch for?"

The brunt of the inquiry thus met, Olly felt that he was acting his part very well, and took courage. Then somebody in the corridor whispered to Mr. Hatville, who immediately asked, —

"What boy was that who came here to the house for you last evening?"

"Boy? I don't know of any boy!" said Olly.

"You remember, Amy; you showed him upstairs," said Mrs. Merriman.

"I know the one you mean: one of the Frog-End boys!" exclaimed Mrs. Murcher. "He said he and some friends of Olly's were camping on the beach, and they wanted him to join them. It can't be that *he* took it."

“Who showed him up-stairs? You, Amy?” cried Hatville.

It was a moment of fearful suspense to Olly, who remembered what Perce had said of coming to invite him to their picnic, and learning that he had either sailed in the yacht or gone home to show his new clothes. He stopped breathing to hear Amy’s reply, in clear, silvery tones, from the farther end of the corridor.

“Yes; I showed him up, and pointed out Olly’s room. Mrs. Murcher thought Olly was there, trying on his new clothes.”

“But he wasn’t,” said Mrs. Murcher. “And the boy came down-stairs again in a very few minutes.”

“Where was he during those few minutes?” Mr. Hatville demanded. “Did you watch him, Amy?”

“I? No, indeed! Why should I take the trouble to watch him?” cried Miss Canfield.

“What was to prevent his going into my room,” Hatville inquired, “and taking the watch?”

“Nothing that I know of.” The silvery

accents faltered. "I don't know but I am to blame, Mr. Hatville!"

"Oh, no! It wasn't your business to watch strangers who gain admission to the house," said Hatville.

"But I did something which I see now was very indiscreet," Amy exclaimed. "It was growing quite dark in the passage, and I opened the door of your room to let in more light. I knew you were not there, and I had no idea your watch was. I am very sorry."

"You are very frank," replied Hatville. "But don't blame yourself. Of course, you had no idea of putting temptation in the way of a rogue."

"No; and I can't believe he was a rogue, — such a fine, honest-looking face as he had!" Amy exclaimed. "But I had no business to open your door."

Olly overheard this conversation with strangely mingled feelings of envy and remorse, of fear and guilt. How admirable was Amy's prompt confession of her fault, and how readily it was forgiven! Why couldn't he

have had a little of her courage, owned his folly, and thrown himself upon Mr. Hatville's mercy! His implied denial had now cut him off from that only noble course; and he saw no way to disentangle the web in which he had involved both himself and his friend.

"Wasn't it the same boy who came here again this morning?" asked Mrs. Merriman. "He had discovered Olly on the Old Cow, though nobody knew it was Olly; and he came to get oars and a spy-glass."

"Yes," said one of the other ladies; "and he came up-stairs to look from the windows. He might have gone into your room then, Mr. Hatville."

"But if he had stolen the watch the night before, would he have shown his face here again this morning?" argued the landlady, who had been too much bewildered by what had occurred in her house to take much part in the previous conversation.

"He might have done just that thing," Hatville replied, "in order to brazen it out, and make a show of innocence. But most likely

he saw the chronometer then, and, having had time to think about it, he watched for a chance to take it this morning, when it was supposed I might have been lost in the yacht."

That seemed very probable; and Mrs. Murcher was obliged to admit that there had been no other stranger about the place to her knowledge, except the messenger who brought Mr. Hatville's telegram. He, however, had not got out of his buggy.

"That same boy is on the beach now, gathering seaweed," said Mrs. Merriman. "At least, he was there a short time ago."

"That's good news!" cried Hatville, gayly. "Who'll go with me, and point him out? We'll interview this seaweed-gatherer, who does a little side business in other people's watches!"

And Olly could hear his boots departing in haste through the corridor and descending the stairs. One or two ladies went with him to identify the supposed culprit; while others remained to discuss this last exciting revelation.

"Such a bright, interesting boy!" said one; "I shouldn't have believed it of him!"

“I thought him a young hero!” cried another, “to leave his work, and start off to the rescue!”

“Well,” said a third, “I thought so, too. He certainly organized the whole thing; and it seems strange to me that he should have shown so much zeal to save the life, perhaps, of the very person whose watch he had just taken!”

“You can’t tell much from a boy’s looks, or his actions either, as to what he may do when exposed to temptation,” was the rather severe rejoinder of the first speaker.

“Not unless you know him pretty well,” added one of the others.

“As we know Olly, for instance,” observed some one else. “I actually believe Mr. Hatville at first suspected he had taken it.”

“Absurd!” “Preposterous!” “Nonsense!” chorused all together. All which Olly overheard with feelings which can hardly be imagined by anybody not actually suffering what he suffered then.

Had the lady boarders spoken harshly or suspiciously of him, he might have hardened



his heart. But their kind words made him bitterly regret that he had not kept his good reputation by frankly owning the fault, which, if discovered now, must convict him of dishonesty.

And to a boy like him, — not a bad boy at heart, by any means, as I trust you all understand, — it was a terrible thing to know that another was accused of downright theft, in consequence of his own foolish and cowardly conduct. And that one a friend, — a friend, too, who had just rescued him from danger and distress! Poor Olly almost wished he had been left to perish; that he had never reached the back of the Old Cow, or been seen or heard of again.

All this he kept to himself, and lay with his face turned to the wall, thinking of the probable result of the charge against Perce Bucklin, and of retribution falling upon himself, when Mrs. Murcher came and pulled the coverlet carefully over his shoulder, and shut the door again gently as she went out, leaving him, as she supposed, to sleep.

“Of course they can’t prove anything against Perce,” he tried to console himself by thinking; for he was utterly ignorant of the astounding evidence that was to free him from the last shadow of suspicion, and fix the guilt on his friend.

## CHAPTER XVII.

## PERCIVAL AND THE WATCH.

AFTER assisting to bring Olly safe to shore, Perce Bucklin had time to reflect upon his still unclaimed treasure-trove, and to grow extremely anxious in regard to it.

He had not felt responsible for its first immersion in the sea. But it had received a second wetting while in his possession. That set him to considering seriously the damage salt water might do, if it should get into the delicate works, and he worried over this to such an extent that he could no longer keep quietly at work, with the watch still in his damp pocket.

“Boys,” said he, “I’m going to have some doughnuts.” He had planned in his own mind that he would take that opportunity to conceal his prize in some safe, dry place.

“I’m hungry, too!” said Moke.

“So’m I!” said Poke.

And all threw down their forks. Their early breakfast, their labor at the kelp, and their exciting adventure on the water had made the morning seem very long, and prepared them for a substantial luncheon.

That wasn’t just what Perce expected. They were no sooner seated on the sand, with pail and basket and a bottle of spruce-beer between them, than fresh restlessness seized him.

Whoever the owner of the watch was, or was to be, he felt that it ought to go at once to the jeweller, and be cleaned and oiled. He suddenly jumped to his feet.

“Boys,” he said, taking a piece of cheese in one hand and a wedge of apple-pie in the other, “go on with your lunch; I’ll be eating mine while I run up and see how Olly is getting along.”

“Take some of ma’s spruce-beer first,” said the twins.

Perce thanked them, but said he would have his share when he came back.

“Don’t wait for me,” he added, “if I should get to talking, and be a little late.”

He had been gone but a few minutes, and the twins were still busy with their bread and butter and doughnuts, when they heard foot-steps coming behind them, and looked around, expecting to see him on his return.

But they saw instead a strange man, with a resolute face under a shady hat-brim. A little behind him lingered two of the boarding-house ladies they had seen before.

“Where’s the other member of your party?” asked the man, after looking beyond the twins and all about. “The one you call Perce.”

“Perce Bucklin? He just went up to the boarding-house,” they replied; “he left us about five minutes ago.”

“I’ve just come from the boarding-house,” said the man. “He wasn’t there when we left; and we met no such boy on the way.”

“That’s strange!” said Moke.

And he and his brother began to call. The woods echoed their voices, but no other voice replied.

“I don’t know where he is!” said Poke, astonished.

“He seemed to have something on his mind,” said Moke; “and maybe” —

“Maybe he went to the village!” exclaimed Poke.

They couldn’t conceive why he should have gone to the village; but they remembered that he had spoken vaguely of having some errand there, which he must do before he returned home.

“Thank you,” the gentleman replied, and went back to speak with the ladies. “That fellow has gone off to dispose of the watch,” he said to them; “and I don’t think these two know anything about it.”

He had, at all events, thought it better not to mention the subject to the twins, in order that, if they should see Perce before he did, they might not put him on his guard.

Perce had, in fact, immediately changed his mind, after leaving his companions; if, indeed, he had any serious notion of going to inquire for Olly.

Instead of going to the boarding-house, he crossed a corner of the woods, in order to strike a road leading to the village, which was about three-quarters of a mile away.

As soon as he was well out of sight, he began to run, pausing only a minute or two in the woods, where he took out his prize, pressed the spring that opened the hunter's case, and looked at the still beautiful, bright, white face of the watch.

"I don't believe it is hurt much!" he exclaimed joyfully. "I wonder how long it has been in the water!"

The pointers indicated ten minutes past two. Thinking the watch must have stopped soon after it dropped into the sea, he muttered, —

"That might have been two o'clock last night, or yesterday, or some day of last week; who knows? Hullo!"

A new mystery! The second-hand, as he watched it, moved! He held the timepiece to his ear, and heard a faint tick.

The works were running still, though feebly. Then the watch could have been in the sea but

a few hours ; and it was no doubt some water that had got into it which had retarded without stopping the motion of the wheels.

“Eight hours slow !” said Perce, thinking it must be by that time past ten o’clock.

Astonished as he was, his purpose to visit the village remained unchanged. Indeed, it seemed to him all the more important that the watch, since he was convinced that it was as yet uninjured, should go to the jeweller’s without delay.

He had not meant, from the first, to withhold it from its rightful owner, if he could find that person ; but only to keep it from the twins, who might set up what he considered an unjust claim to half its value. He expected to advertise it, after putting it into the jeweller’s hands ; he had, therefore, no motive for disguising from the latter the manner in which it had come into his possession.

He was prepared to tell a straightforward story ; only leaving out his want of confidence in the twins, of which he couldn’t help feeling ashamed. But, unfortunately, the jeweller was



not in his shop. After a little search, Perce found him walking with a man on the street; and, coming to his side, whispered in his ear that he had a little job for him.

As they entered the shop together, Perce did not notice a third man, flushed with excitement and haste, who had followed him at a distance, and was now watching, with an air of affected carelessness, to see what he would do.

As the jeweller went behind his counter, Perce stood before it, with his back to the door, and said breathlessly, in a low tone, as he produced the watch, —

“Here’s something I want you to be rather confidential about until” —

Until it could be advertised in due form, he was going to say; for he was anxious that no false claimant should get a description of the watch beforehand. But he had hardly yet recovered his breath, and, while he was hesitating, the jeweller opened the watch.

“Where has this been? In the water?” he asked.

“Yes,” said Perce. “And I want you to

do whatever is necessary to put it into good order, and to say nothing about it until" —

Here he stopped again, and looked quickly around at somebody who just then entered the shop.

It was Mr. Hatville, who, having stood a moment at the open door, watching the jeweller and the boy, stepped in quickly, but quietly, and, laying one hand, with a firm grasp, on Perce's arm, extended the other over the counter.

"Mr. Middleton," said he, "I don't think you mean to be a receiver of stolen goods; but it happens that you have my watch!"

"Yours, Mr. Hatville!" said the astonished jeweller. "I thought I had seen it before" (for Mr. Hatville had dealt with him at times, and had shown him his chronometer with much pride), "but never in such a condition!"

"It has run down, I suppose," said the owner; adding with grim sarcasm, "I hoped the thief would know enough to wind it! Boy!" he cried, tightening his grip on Perce's arm, "you've no business to steal watches, if you can't keep 'em wound!"



"HERE HE STOPPED AGAIN AND LOOKED QUICKLY AROUND." — Page 186.



## CHAPTER XVIII.

## PERCIVAL AND THE OWNER OF THE WATCH.

PERCE stood aghast and trembling, trying to speak. The jeweller spoke for him.

“This boy didn’t steal it, did he? I know his father. He’s one of the selectmen of the town. You are Mr. Bucklin’s boy, aren’t you?”

“I am Percival Bucklin,” said Perce, endeavoring to assume the proverbial boldness of innocence, but, nevertheless, appearing far more guilty than if he had been a hardened rogue. “I didn’t steal it. I found it.”

“Yes, and I know just where you found it!” said Hatville. “I know, too, just where *you’ll* be found, in about ten minutes, if Mr. Middleton will have the kindness to step out and call a policeman.”

“Give the boy a chance,” said the jeweller. “He belongs to one of the best families in

town. I believe he's honest. Tell just how you came by the watch, Percival."

"That's what I was going to do when this man rushed in and grabbed me," said Perce.

He was once more beginning his story, when Mr. Hatville broke out again excitedly, —

"Where's the rest of the chain?"

"It's just as I found it," said Perce.

"And what's the matter with the watch?" said Hatville. He had loosed his hold of the boy's arm, and taken the timepiece in both hands. "It hasn't run down!"

"Worse than that," Mr. Middleton replied. "It has been in the water."

"Boy!" cried the angry owner, "did you have it with you when you went out to the Old Cow for Olly Burdeen this morning?"

"Yes," said Perce; "but" —

"And did you get wet?"

Hatville reached down, and felt the boy's clothes, which were still damp.

"A wave dashed over me," Perce admitted, "but" —

"Now, did you ever hear of anything so ex-

asperating?" said Hatville, turning to Mr. Middleton with a grim and very unpleasant expression. "It wasn't enough for this young rascal to take a man's timepiece, that had been regulated down to a second and a half a month; but he must also go and jump into the sea with it!"

"I didn't jump into the sea with it!" Perce spoke up impatiently. "Can't you hear what I have to say? I found that watch in the seaweed, on the beach, early this morning, just as the tide had left it a little while before. If it hadn't been for getting Olly off the rocks, I should have thought to bring it here earlier. I meant to have it cleaned and oiled, and then to advertise for the owner, if he wasn't heard from in the mean while."

"That seems a straightforward story," said the jeweller.

"What made him so sly with you, then?" Mr. Hatville demanded. "Wasn't he asking you to say nothing about it, or something of the kind, when I came in?"

The jeweller had to admit that Perce had

made some such request; which the boy hastened to explain.

“I said all that; and I was going to say more. I didn't want anybody to see it until it was advertised, and until the owner proved his claim by giving a description of it.”

“Ah, very wise, indeed! and very plausible! But how did the watch get into the seaweed, without help from somebody?” returned Hatville. “This boy, as it happens, is the only person who had a chance to take it. Now, young fellow, your best course is to own right up. Weren't you in my room, at Mrs. Murcher's, last night, and again this morning?”

“I don't know anything about your room,” Perce replied. “I went through the upper entry to Olly's room last evening; but that was the only room I looked into. This morning I went into some gentleman's room—I don't know whose—to get a view from the window, while the ladies were hunting for a spy-glass; but I saw no watch there, and I didn't touch a thing.”



“Besides, if you notice,” Mr. Middleton remarked, “this watch, to be more than eight hours slow, as you see it is, and still going, must have been in the water considerably more than eight hours.”

The argument seemed to strike Mr. Hatville forcibly. But a moment's reflection enabled him to put it easily aside.

“It had probably run down,” he said; “and the boy has wound it since.”

“Why! I haven't any key!” Perce exclaimed.

“And you didn't know it was a stem-winder?” said the owner, with incredulous irony.

Perce said, very truly, that he hadn't examined it sufficiently to discover that fact; he had heard of stem-winders, but had never before seen one. Mr. Hatville smiled again.

“I can't yet feel quite so sure of this boy's honesty as you seem to, Mr. Middleton,” he said. “There are some things that need to be explained: how the watch got out of my

room and into the sea, in the first place; and how the chain was broken."

"If I meant to steal it, why should I break the chain?" Perce demanded.

"I don't know your motive; perhaps because you saw my monogram on the seal. Come, my boy," said Mr. Hatville; "come and show me just where and how you found it."

So saying, he left the watch in the jeweller's hands, and started to return with Perce to the scene of the kelp-gathering.

## CHAPTER XIX.

## THE MISSING LINKS.

ON the way, Perce Bucklin's spirits did not rise, as a perfectly truthful boy's spirits might have been expected to do, under the circumstances.

He had already felt, with some uneasiness of conscience, that his disingenuous treatment of his partners in the kelp-gathering was unworthy of the son of so upright a father. But he was now appalled by the thought of what might be the consequences of his conduct.

As they walked down the road together, Mr. Hatville asked, —

“ Was anybody with you on the beach when you found the watch ? ”

Perce had known very well that some such question must come, and he had been dreading it. He had tried to think what he should reply ; but now he could only stammer, —

“Yes;—that is, no;—the Elder boys had just gone off with a load of seaweed, and I was waiting for them to come back with the cart.”

“How far away were they? out of sight?” continued Mr. Hatville.

“No; not exactly. We were hauling the kelp into piles, just above high water,” explained Perce.

“Oh, yes! They were near you, then,” said Mr. Hatville, who had observed the heaps of seaweed on the shore. “So they’ll know all about it. Let me hear your story first; then I will hear theirs. Just how it was found, you understand.”

“It will be of no use for you to ask them,” said Perce.

“How so?” replied Mr. Hatville, with another of his sarcastic, incredulous smiles.

“They didn’t know anything about it,” Perce acknowledged miserably.

“So you mean to say that you found a valuable gold watch on the beach, and said nothing about it to your friends, who must have been

within sight and hearing at the time? That's a likely story!"

"I don't wonder you think so," said Perce in deep distress; "but I'll tell you why I didn't. We had gone into partnership for getting kelp and driftwood, and had made an agreement that we were to divide, half and half, everything we found, — half for me and the team, which is my father's, and half for them. Then, you see, when I found the watch, I was afraid they might claim a share in it, provided the owner didn't turn up."

"Very ingenious!" was Mr. Hatville's skeptical comment.

"You may believe it or not; it's true!" exclaimed Perce, in a broken and agitated voice. "I did a mean thing; and for that reason I'd rather you shouldn't say anything to the Elder boys about it. But I suppose they will have to know it. I suppose everybody will have to know it!" And here his voice failed completely.

"I suppose the particulars will have to be known to several persons before we get through

with this little business," Mr. Hatville replied. "Have you anything more to say for yourself?"

The boy had nothing more to say, except to describe more particularly how he took the watch out of the dripping seaweed, and to protest again his innocence of any dishonest purpose; all of which, however, did not seem to make much impression upon Mr. Hatville.

They walked on in silence down the sandy road, Perce as deeply wretched as if he had been already on his way to the lock-up.

Even if he were spared that last humiliation, he felt that his good name was gone forever. The taking of the watch might not be publicly proved against him; but, unless the mystery of its disappearance from the owner's room, and its re-appearance in the wave-tossed kelp on the shore — unless that could be explained, who would believe him guiltless? The suspicion might cling to him through life.

What would his father say? And how it would grieve his dear mother!

"We'll not go to the beach now," said Mr.

Hatville, "since your friends can't say anything to help you. I don't see why I brought you away from the village, anyway. But never mind; we can trudge back there. And we'll go to Mrs. Murcher's first, now that we are so far on our way."

Harsh as had been his treatment of a supposed culprit, under what seemed to him very great provocation, Mr. Hatville couldn't help pitying the boy a little; and, now that his anger was cooled, he wished to reflect before deciding to turn so youthful an offender over to the officers of the law.

He kept Perce by his side as he mounted the piazza-steps.

"Yes, I've found him, and my watch, too," he said to the boarders, who came out to hear the news. "It was in his possession."

Glad as they were to hear of his good fortune, nothing but painful surprise and commiseration was expressed in the womanly and girlish faces that looked upon the unhappy boy.

"Oh, then! what shall we do with the money?" sighed Mrs. Merriman.

Whereupon it came out that the friends of Olly Burdeen had subscribed a small collection to reward his rescuers. But, could they bestow it upon such a boy as this one had shown himself to be?

“Give it to the others!” cried Perce passionately. “I don’t want any pay for what I did. No, nor for saving this man’s watch either, though I don’t think I ought to be treated this way, as if I had stolen it.”

“Does he deny it?” cried Amy Canfield, eagerly.

“Oh, of course!” replied Mr. Hatville.

“Of course, I do!” Perce exclaimed, raising his voice in vehement protestation. “I found it in the seaweed, on the beach. But he won’t believe a word I say!”

And he stood defiant, desperate, his eyes flashing through tears.

The most tender-hearted of the lady boarders couldn’t blame Mr. Hatville for declining to accept such a story as that. But just then another actor in the drama rushed upon the scene.



It was Olly Burdeen himself, in his old clothes, his hair tumbled, his eyes excited, his voice choking as he tried to speak.

"The watch?" he gasped out. "He isn't to blame! I—I took it!"

In his room, at the end of the corridor above, he had overheard enough to know that the watch was found, and that Perce was in trouble. Equally excited by the good news and the bad, he had obeyed an impulse of generosity and gratitude, and hastened to the defence of the friend to whom he owed his recent rescue.

But, strange to say, nobody believed him! He was delirious; he was telling a noble untruth; he was sacrificing himself for one to whom he fancied that he owed his life. Everybody believed implicitly in Olly; nobody believed in Perce.

Only Mr. Hatville, whose mind had reverted more than once to Olly, while considering the other's strange story, listened carefully, thinking that the clew to the mystery might at last be coming.

“How is that, Olly?” he asked.

“I just put on the watch, to wear it a little while with my new clothes,” Master Burdeen confessed inpetuously. “Then, when the accident happened to me in the boat, I suppose the oar snatched it from my pocket. You didn’t find the whole of the chain, did you, Perce?”

“The hook and the seal are missing,” Mr. Hatville replied.

“Here they are!” said Olly, as he took from his pocket and held out the evidence against himself, glad enough now that he had not thrown it into the sea, when tempted to do so.

After that nobody doubted his story.

“But why didn’t you tell me this before?” demanded Mr. Hatville, as he took the missing links.

“I thought the watch was lost, and I was afraid,” poor Olly confessed. “But I couldn’t bear to see *him* accused!”

After this frank acknowledgment from Olly, Mr. Hatville forebore to utter a single reproach, and only said, —

“You needn’t have been afraid, if you had

only come forward and told the simple truth. The watch is found, and there's no great harm done, though I shall have some trouble in regulating it again down to a second and a half a month. You'd better go back to bed, Olly."

And Olly went, abjectly humbled and blinded by tears of shame and contrition, yet almost happy in the wonderful relief the confession of his fault and the vindication of his friend had brought to his tortured conscience.

"I was sure he never took it!" he heard Miss Amy Canfield exclaim with glad vehemence; but he knew that she was speaking of Percival, not of himself.

## CHAPTER XX.

## PERCE SETTLES WITH HIS PARTNERS.

THERE was no longer any question as to what should be done with the contribution the boarders had made up to reward the humane efforts of Olly's rescuers.

They had collected ten dollars. To this Mr. Hatville begged the privilege of adding ten more.

"For finding my watch, and for my treatment of the finder!" he said.

But Percival couldn't bear that anything like that should cloud the great joy with which the welcome light of truth filled his soul.

"I don't want any reward for anything!" he exclaimed. "I can't take your money!" and he pushed back Mr. Hatville's contribution across the hall-table. "But I've no right to refuse anything intended for my friends; and,

if the ladies insist, I will take their money, and give it to Moke and Poke."

"Moke and Poke!" said Amy, with a laugh. "What names!"

"They are my partners on the beach,—the Elder boys, Moses and Porter," Perce explained.

The ladies did insist; and, with light feet and a lighter heart, he hastened down the sandy path to the shore.

The twins, who had resumed their work, were inclined to show a little resentment of their partner's prolonged absence. They wished to know what "that man" wanted of him, and where he had been all the while.

"I've been getting a reward for you!" said Perce gayly.

"A reward!" cried Moke.

"For what?" asked Poke.

"For rescuing Olly," Perce replied, opening his hand, and showing the money. "Here it is, with the compliments of the lady boarders at Mrs. Murcher's."

"Oh!" ejaculated Moke.

“Ho!” aspirated Poke.

“We didn’t want any pay for that!” said both together.

“But it took your time, and interrupted your work; and it really seemed a pleasure for them to give you something. Olly’s a great favorite up there,” added Percival.

“Five dollars!” shouted Moke, brandishing his share above his head.

“Five dollars!” shrieked Poke, capering wildly on the sand.

They had never in their lives been so rich. But where was Percival’s share?

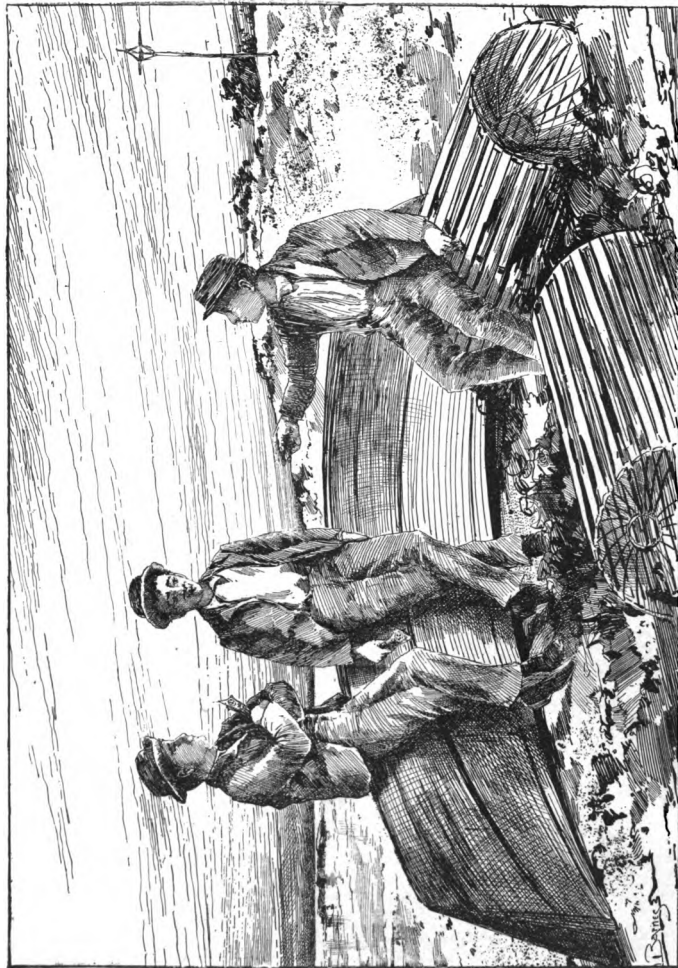
“They offered me ten dollars, or, at least, the man did. But I didn’t take it. The truth is, boys,”— And after a little hesitation, Perce told the story of the watch that he had found and restored to the owner.

“And it was Olly that borrowed and lost it?” exclaimed Moke.

“And never told us!” ejaculated Poke.

“Why didn’t *you* tell us you found it?” cried both together.

“As we were partners — going halves in



"AFTER A LITTLE HESITATION PERCE TOLD THE STORY." — Page 154.





everything, —” I didn’t know — Perce blushed and stammered — “I didn’t know but you’d want your share of that, too!”

“Oh, nonsense!” said Poke.

“Of course, we shouldn’t!” said Moke.

So that matter was settled — far more easily and satisfactorily, Perce thought, than might have been the case if no owner for the watch had been found.

“Come!” said Moke, looking again at his money before pocketing it; “we’ve done enough work for one day.”

“Never mind about hauling any more kelp,” said Poke.

“We’ll have the fun of coming again tomorrow,” said both together.

Perce himself was quite willing to go home to dinner. So, having dumped their last load of seaweed (which would not be much more than a third of a load when, after it was well rotted, they should haul it to the farms), they filled up the cart-box with driftwood. Upon that they laid their blankets, and presently climbed up to the top themselves, after bid-

ding good-by to the beach and the bright sea, and turning the oxen into the wild woodland road.

Then, mounted comfortably upon their loaded cart, they drove back through beautiful sunshine and shade, making the woods ring once more with their voices in glad chorus, —

“ Now, run and tell Elijah to hurry up Pomp,  
And meet us at the gum-tree down in the swamp,  
To wake Nicodemus to day ! ”

Although he had no money to show, Percival was not the least contented of the three with the result of their work.

He had done something for his friend Olly and for Mr. Hatville ; and no reward could have given him quite so pure a satisfaction as the feeling that he had done it without reward.

Moreover, as he had liberated the watch and chain from their slimy environment of rockweed and kelp, even so his conscience and his good name had been freed from the entanglement that at one time threatened to

drag them into a hideous abyss. To have kept his honor unsullied was a greater joy than the possession of many watches.

Yet I can not say that Perce Bucklin was made very unhappy when, not long after, he received, by express from Boston, a small package, which, on being opened, was found to contain a very pretty, silver, Swiss watch, and a card bearing Mr. Hatville's name. It was certainly a gratifying token of that gentleman's confidence and regard.



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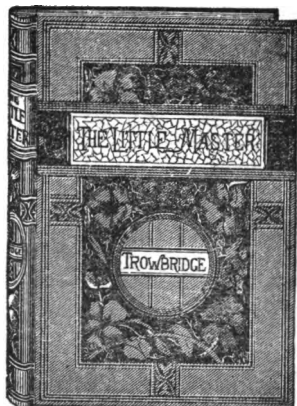
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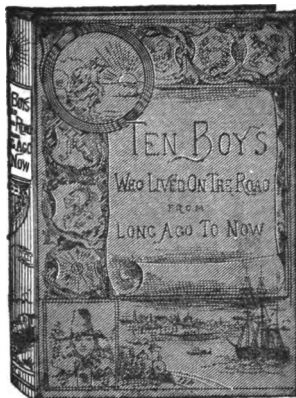
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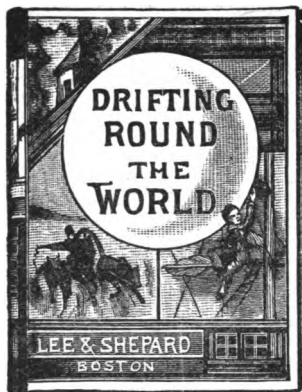
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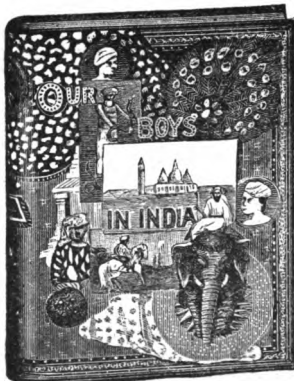
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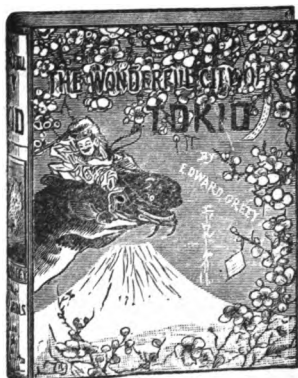
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Further Adventures of the Jewett Family and their  
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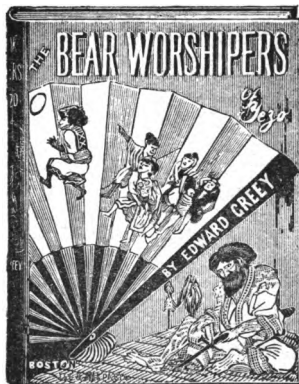
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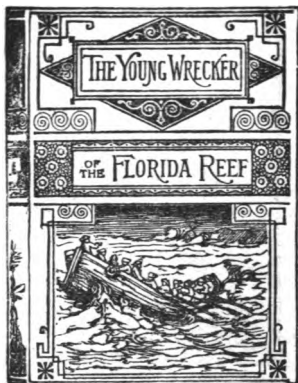
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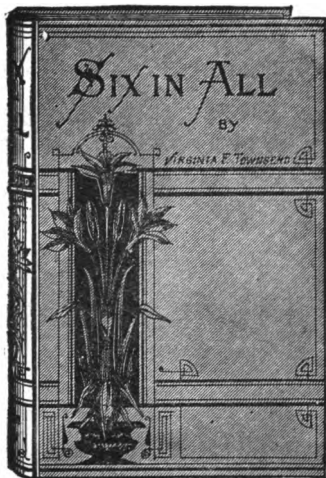
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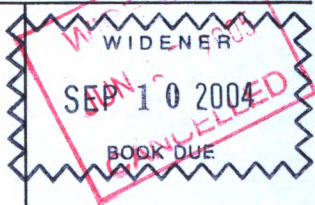
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